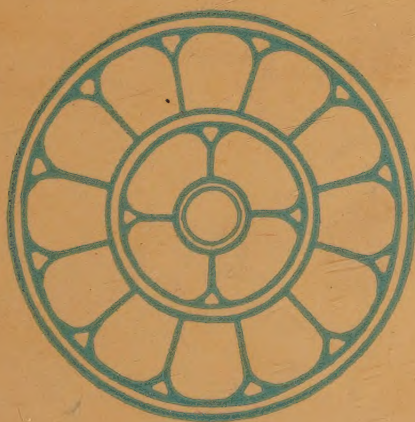




# The ADVENT

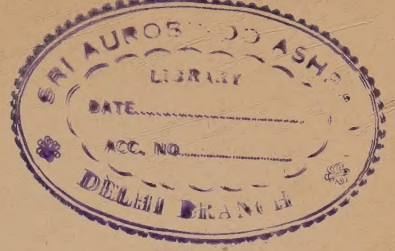
*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of  
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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# *The Advent*

Whether it seem good or evil to men's eyes,  
Only for good the secret Will can work.

SAVITRI—BOOK VI CANTO I

# The ADVENT

August 1948

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Our destiny is written in double terms:  
Through Nature's contraries we draw near God;  
Out of a darkness we have grown to light.  
Death is our road to immortality.  
"Cry woe, cry woe" the world's voices wail,  
Yet conquers the eternal Good at last.

SAVITRI—BOOK VI CANTO I





THE GOLDEN PURUSA

हिरण्यः पुरुषः

BY KRISHNALAL

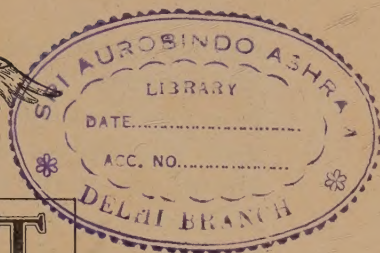
कृष्णलाल







# The ADVENT



The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

## EDITORIALS

### THE AGE OF SRI AUROBINDO

SOMEONE has written to this effect: "This is not the age of Sri Aurobindo. His ideal of a divine life upon earth may or may not be true; at any rate it is not of today or even of tomorrow. Humanity will take some time before it reaches that stage or its possibility. What we are concerned with here and now is something perhaps less great, less spiritual, but more urgent and more practical. The problem is not to run away with one's soul, but to maintain its earthly tenement, to keep body and soul together: one has to live first, live materially before one can hope to live spiritually."

Well, the view expressed in these words is not a new revelation. It has been the cry of suffering humanity through the ages. Man has borne his cross since the beginning of his creation through want and privation, through disease and bereavement, through all manner of turmoil and tribulation, and yet—*mirabile dictu*—at the same time, in the very midst of those conditions, he has been aspiring and yearning for something else, ignoring the present, looking into the beyond. It is not the prosperous and the more happily placed in life who find it more easy to turn to the higher life, it is not the wealthiest who has the greatest opportunity to pursue a spiritual ideal. On the contrary, spiritual leaders have thought and experienced otherwise.

Apart from the well-recognised fact that only in distress does the normal man think of God and non-worldly things, the real matter, however, is that the inner life is a thing apart and follows its own line of movement,



does not depend upon, is not subservient to, the kind of outer life that one may happen to live under. The Bible says indeed, "Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn"...But the Upanishad declares, on the other hand, that even as one lies happily on a royal couch, bathes and anoints himself with all the perfumes of the world, has attendants all around and always to serve him, even so, one can be full of the divine consciousness from the crown of the head to the tip of his toe-nail. In fact, a poor or a prosperous life is in no direct or even indirect ratio to a spiritual life. All the miseries and immediate needs of a physical life do not and cannot detain or delay one from following the path of the ideal; nor can all your riches be a burden to your soul and overwhelm it, if it chooses to walk on—it can not only walk, but soar and fly with all that knapsack on its back.

If one were to be busy about reforming the world first and when that was done then alone to turn to other-worldly things, in that case, one would never take the turn, for the world will never be reformed totally or even considerably in that way. It is not that reformers have for the first time appeared on the earth in the present age. Men have attempted social, political, economic and moral reforms from times immemorial. But that has not barred the spiritual attempt or minimised its importance. To say that because an ideal is apparently too high or too great for the present age, it must be kept in cold storage is to set a premium on the present nature of humanity and eternise it: that would bind the world to its old moorings and never give it the opportunity to be free and go out into the high seas of larger and greater realisations.

The ideal or perhaps one should say the policy of Realpolitik is the thing needed in this world. To achieve something actually in the physical and material field, even a lesser something, is worth much more than speculating on high-flaunting chimeras and indulging in day-dreams. Yes, but what is this something that has to be achieved in the material world? It is always an ideal. Even procuring food for each and every person, clothing and housing all is not less an ideal for all its concern about actuality. Only there are ideals and ideals: some are nearer to the earth, some seem to be in the background. But the mystery is that it is not always the ideal nearest to the earth which is the easiest to achieve or the first thing to be done first. Do we not see before our very eyes how some very simple innocent social and economic changes are difficult to carry out—they bring in their train quite disproportionately gestures and movements of violence and revolution? That is because we seek to cure the symptoms and not touch the root of the disease. For even the most innocent-looking social, economic or political abuse has at its base far-reaching attitudes and life urges—even a spiritual



outlook—that have to be sought out and tackled first, if the attempt at reform is to be permanently and wholly successful. Even in mundane matters we do not dig deep enough, or rise high enough.

Indeed, looking from a standpoint that views the working of the forces that act and achieve—and not the external facts and events and arrangements alone—one finds that things that are achieved on the material plane are first developed and matured and made ready behind the veil and at a given moment burst out and manifest themselves often unexpectedly and suddenly like a chick out of the shell or the young butterfly out of the cocoon. The Gita points to that truth of Nature when it says: these beings have already been killed by Me. It is not that a long or strenuous physical planning and preparation alone or in the largest measure brings about a physical realisation. The deeper we go within, the farther we are away from the surface, the nearer we come to the roots and sources of things even most superficial. The spiritual view sees and declares that it is the Brahmic consciousness that holds, inspires, builds up Matter, the physical body and form of Brahman.

The highest ideal, the very highest which God and Nature and Man have in view, is not and cannot be kept in cold storage: it is being worked out even here and now, and it has to be worked out here and now. The ideal of the Life Divine embodies a central truth of existence, and however difficult or chimerical it may appear to be to the normal mind, it is the preoccupation of the inner being of man—all other ways or attempts of curing human ills are faint echoes, masks, diversions of this secret urge at the source and heart of things. That ideal is a norm and a force that is ever dynamic and has become doubly so since it has entered the earth atmosphere and the waking human consciousness and is labouring there. It is always safer and wiser to recognise that fact, to help in the realisation of that truth and be profited by it.

## AN AGE OF REVOLUTION

There has been a revolutionary change in the scientific outlook in recent times. A very fundamental principle—the very postulate on which the whole edifice of physical Science has been built up—is now being called in question. We thought that the unity and uniformity of Nature is a cardinal fact and nothing can shake it. Well, it appears that solid basis too has proved to be no more than an eidolon.

The search for a universal principle of Nature is a metaphysical as well as a scientific preoccupation. In ancient days, for example, we had the

Water of Thales or the Fire of Heraclitus as the one original unifying principle of this kind. With the coming of the Renaissance and the New Illumination we laughed them out and installed instead the mysterious Ether. For a long time this universal reigned supreme and now that too has gone the way of its predecessors. We thought for a time that we had found in Electric Energy the one sovereign principle in Nature. At a time when we had a few elements—discrete, different, fundamental units—that in their varying combinations built up the composite structure of Nature, apart from the fact that they reposed finally on the ultimate unifying principle of Ether, it was found also that they all behaved in an uniform and identical and therefore predictable manner. The time and the place (and the mass) being given, every thing went according to a pattern and a formula, definite, fixed, mathematically rigid. Even the discovery of one element after another till the number reached the famous figure 92 (itself following a line of mathematically precise and inevitable development) did not materially alter the situation and caused no tribulation. For on further scrutiny a closer unity revealed itself: the supposed disparity in the substance of the various elements was found to be an illusion, for they all appeared now as different organisations or dispositions of the same electric energy (although the identity of electric energy with radiant energy was not always very clear). Thus we could conclude that as the substance was the same, its mode of working also would be uniform and patterned. In other words, the mechanistic conception still ruled our view of Nature. That means, the ultimate units, the particles (of energy) that compose Nature are like sea-sands or water-drops, each one is fundamentally similar to any other and all behave similarly, reacting uniformly to the same forces that act upon them.

Well, it is now found that they do not do so. However same or similar constitutionally, each unit is *sui generis* and its movement cannot be predicted. That movement does not depend upon its mass or store of energy or its position in a pattern, as a wholly mechanistic conception would demand: it is something incalculable, one should say even, erratic. In a radioactive substance, the particle that is shot out, becomes active, cannot be predetermined by any calculation, even if that is due to a definitely and precisely arranged bombardment. So we have come to posit a principle of uncertainty, as a very fundamental law of Nature. It practically declares that the ultimate particle is an autonomous unit, it is an individual, almost a personality, and seems to have a will of its own. A material unit acts very much like a biological unit: it does not obey mechanically, answer mechanically as an automaton, but seems to possess a capacity for choice, for assent



or refusal, for a free determination. The mechanistic view presented is due to an average functioning. The phenomenon has been explained by a very apt image. It is like an army. A group of soldiers, when they are on parade, look all similar and geometrically patterned: each is just like another and all move and march in the same identical manner. But that is when you look at the whole, the collectivity, but looked individually, each one regains his separate distinct personality, each having his own nature and character, his own unique history: there no two are alike, each is *non pareil* and behaves differently, incalculably.

That is how we have been led almost to the threshold of a will, of a life principle, of a consciousness, however rudimentary, embedded in the heart of Matter. All the facts that are now cropping up, the new discoveries that are being made and which we have to take into cognisance lead inevitably towards such a conclusion. Without such a conclusion a rational co-ordination of all the data of experience is hardly possible. A physical scientist may not feel justified to go beyond the purely physical data, but the implications of even such data, the demand for a fair hypothesis that can harmonise and synthesise them are compelling even a physicist to become a psychologist and a metaphysician.

Looked at from below with the eye of reason and sense observation straining at it, the thing that appears only as a possibility—at best, as a probability—is revealed to the eyes of vision surveying from above as a self-evident reality, a reality before which the apparent realities posited by sense and reason become subsidiary and auxiliary, far-off echoes. The facts of sense-perception are indeed the branches spread out below while the root of the tree lies above: in other words, the root-reality is consciousness and all that exist are vibrations of that consciousness extended and concretised. This is the truth which modern science, in its farthest advances, would like to admit but dare not,

## DARSHANA AND PHILOSOPHY

There is a mental approach to spiritual truths and there is a direct and immediate approach or rather contact. The mind sees as though through a mist, a darkling glass, a more or less opaque veil, and the thing envisaged presents a blurred and not unoften a deformed appearance. The mind has its own predispositions—its own categories and terms, its own forms and figures—which it has to use when it seeks to express that which is beyond it. Naturally the object, the truth as it is, it cannot apprehend or represent; it gives as it were the reverse side of an embroidery work. It goes round

about the thing, has to take recourse to all kinds of contortions and gymnastics and grimaces to ape the natural gesture of the truth. But mind acts in this way, as a veil rather than a medium, when one is stationed in it or below it and strains to look at what is above and beyond. On the other hand, if the consciousness is stationed above the mind, that is to say, if it has direct access or contact with the truth, the spiritual reality, in that case, mind need not act as a veil, it too can be made transparent, and suffused with the higher light, it too can translate faithfully, present and embody the reality beyond somewhat as it actually is, in its native rhythm and figure and not diffracted and diffused through a hazy atmosphere.

European thought, European philosophy particularly, moves under the aegis of the Mind. It takes its stand within the Mind and from there tries to reach out to truths and realities; and therefore, however far it goes, its highest flights of perception, its most intimate contacts with spirit-truths are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. The Indian standpoint, on the contrary, is first to contact the truth by a direct realisation—through meditation, concentration, an uplifting and a deepening of the consciousness, through Yoga, spiritual discipline, and then endeavour to express the truth thus realised, directly intuited or revealed, through mental terms, to make it familiar and communicable to the normal intelligence. Mind, so subordinated and keyed to a new rhythm, becomes, as far as it is possible for it, a channel, a vehicle and not a veil. All the main systems of Indian philosophy have this characteristic as their background. Each stands on a definite experience, a spiritual realisation, a direct contact with an aspect of truth and in and through that seeks to give a world-view, building up an intellectual system, marshalling rational conclusions that are natural to it or derive inevitably from it. In the Upanishads, which preceded the Darshanas, the spiritual realisations were not yet mentally systematised or logically buttressed: truths were delivered there as self-evident statements, as certitudes luminous in their own authenticity. We accept them without question and take them into our consciousness as forming its fundamental norms, structuring its most intimate inscape. This is *darshana*, seeing, as philosophy is named in India. One sees the truth or reality and describes it as it is seen, its limbs and gestures, its constituents and functions. Philosophy here is fundamentally a recording of one's vision and a translation or presentation of it in mental terms.

The procedure of European philosophy is different. There the reason or the mental light is the starting-point. That light is cast about: one collects facts, one observes things and happenings and then proceeds to find out a general truth—a law, a hypothesis—justified by such observations. But as



a matter of fact this is the ostensible method: it is only a make-believe. For mind and reason are not normally so neutral and impersonal, a *tabula rasa*. The observer already comes into the field with a definite observational angle and a settled viewpoint. The precise sciences of today have almost foundered on this question of the observer entering inextricably into his observations and vitiating them. So in philosophy too as it is practised in Europe, on a closer observation, if the observer is carefully observed, one finds not unoften a core of suppositions, major premisses taken for granted hidden behind the logical apparatus. In other words, even a hardened philosopher cherishes at the back of his mind *à priori* judgments and his whole philosophy is only a rationalisation of an inner prejudgment, almost a window-dressing of a perception that came to him direct and in other secret ways. That was what Kant meant when he made the famous distinction between the Pure and the Practical Reason and their categories. Only the direct perceptions, the spiritual realisations are so much imbedded behind, covered so much with the mist of mind's struggle and tension and imaginative construction that it is not always easy to disengage the pure metal from the ore.

We shall take the case of one such philosopher and try to illustrate our point. We are thinking of Whitehead. The character of European philosophical mind is well exemplified in this remarkable modern philosopher. The anxiety to put the inferences into a strict logical frame makes a naturally abstruse and abstract procedure more abstruse and abstract. The effort to present supra-rational truths in terms of reason and syllogism clouds the issues more than it clarifies them. The fundamental perception, the living intuition that is behind his entire philosophy and world outlook is that of an Immanent God, a dynamic evolving Power working out the growth and redemption of mankind and the world (the apotheosis of the World, as he puts it). It is the theme which comes last in the development of his system, as the culminating conclusion of his philosophy, but it is the basic presupposition, the first principle that inspires his whole outlook, all the rest is woven and extended around this central nucleus. The other perception intimate to this basic original perception and inseparable from it is a synthetic view in which things that are usually supposed to be contraries find their harmony and union, viz., God and the World, Permanence and Flux, unity and multiplicity, the universal and the individual. The equal reality of the two poles of an integral truth is characteristic of many of the modern philosophical systems. In this respect Whitehead echoes a fundamental conclusion of Sri Aurobindo.

There is another concept in Whitehead which seems to be moulded after a parallel concept in Sri Aurobindo: it is with regard to the working out of

the process of creation, the mechanism of its dynamism. It is almost a glimpse into the occult functioning of the world forces. Whitehead speaks of two principles that guide the world process, first, the principle of limitation, and second, the principle of *ingress*. The first one Sri Aurobindo calls the principle of concentration (and of exclusive concentration) by which the infinite and the eternal limits himself, makes himself finite and temporal and infinitesimal, the universal transforms itself into the individual and the particular. The second is the principle of descent, which is almost the corner-stone in Sri Aurobindo's system. There are layers of reality: the higher forces and formulations enter into the lower, work upon it and bring about a change and transformation, purification and redemption. All progress and evolution is due to this influx of the higher, the deeper into the lower and superficial plane of existence.

There is one concept in Whitehead which seems rather strange to us; it is surely a product of the brain-mind. God, according to him, is not the creator: he is only the Redeemer, he is a shaper but not the source and origin of things. That is because he thinks that if God is made the creator of the world, he would be held responsible for the evil there. This difficulty comes when one thinks of God too much in the popular anthropomorphic way, like someone seated above the world and passing judgment upon a world which is not his doing. God is perhaps a lover of the world, but not its Master—a certain Christian outlook says. According to Sri Aurobindo God is a triple reality in his transcendental, cosmic and individual aspect. In creating the world, God creates, that is to say, manifests himself. And Evil is an evolute in the process of God's self-creation through self-limitation: it proceeds to self-annihilation and even self-transmutation in a farther process of God's self-unfoldment in world and Nature.

To return to our main theme, we should point out, however, that in Europe too at one time (during the whole Middle age, the Age of Scholasticism) philosophy was considered only as a handmaid of Religion, it had to echo and amplify and reason out the dogmas (which were sometimes real spiritual experiences or revelations); but the New Illumination came and philosophy declared her autonomy, only that autonomy did not last long. For today in Europe Philosophy has become the handmaid of Science. It was natural, since Reason is not a self-sufficient faculty, it is mediatory and must be ancillary either to something above it or something below it—either to Revelation or to sense-perception.



# LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

## PLANES AND PARTS OF THE BEING

### I

**H**IGHER mind is one of the planes of the spiritual mind, the first and lowest of them; it is above the normal mental level. Inner mind is that which lies behind the surface mind (our ordinary mentality) and can only be directly experienced (apart from its vrittis in the surface mind such as philosophy, poetry, idealism, etc.) by sadhana, by breaking down the habit of being on the surface and by going deeper within.

Larger mind is a general term to cover the realms of mind which become our field whether by going within or widening into the cosmic consciousness.

The true mental being is not the same as the inner mental—true mental, true vital, true physical being means the Purusha of that level freed from the error and ignorant thought and will of the lower Prakriti and directly open to the knowledge and guidance above.

Higher vital usually refers to the vital mind and emotive being as opposed to the middle vital which has its seat in the navel and is dynamic, sensational and passionate and the lower which is made up of the smaller movements of human life—desire and life-reactions.

### II

The mind proper is divided into three parts—thinking Mind, dynamic Mind, externalising Mind—the former concerned with ideas and knowledge in their own right, the second with the putting out of mental forces or realisation of the idea, the third with the expression of them in life (not only by speech, but by any form it can give). The word “physical mind” is rather ambiguous, because it can mean this externalising Mind and the mental in the physical taken together.

Vital Mind proper is a sort of a mediator between vital emotion, desire, impulsion, etc. and the mental proper. It expresses the desires, feelings, emotions, passions, ambitions, possessive and active tendencies of the vital and throws them into mental forms (the pure imaginations or dreams of greatness, happiness, etc. in which men indulge are one peculiar form of the vital mind activity). There is still a lower stage of the mental in the vital which merely expresses the vital stuff without subjecting it to any

play of intelligence. It is through this mental vital that the vital passions, impulses, desires rise up and get into the Buddhi and either cloud or distort it.

As the vital Mind is limited by the vital view and feeling of things (while the dynamic Intelligence is not, for it acts by the idea and reason), so the mind in the physical or mental physical is limited by the physical view and experience of things, it mentalises the experiences brought by the contacts of outward life and things and does not go beyond that (though it can do that much very cleverly), unlike the externalising mind which deals with them more from the reason and its higher intelligence. But in practice these two usually get mixed together. The mechanical mind is a much lower action of the mental physical which, left to itself, would only repeat customary ideas and record the natural reflexes of the physical consciousness to the contacts of outward life and things.

The lower vital as distinguished from the higher is concerned only with the small greeds, small desires, small passions, etc. which make up the daily stuff of life for the ordinary sensational man—while the vital physical proper is the nervous being giving vital reflexes to contacts of things with the physical consciousness.

### III

Most men are, like animals, driven by the forces of Nature: whatever desires come, they fulfil them, whatever emotions come they allow them to play, whatever physical wants they have, they try to satisfy. We say then that the activities and feelings of men are controlled by their *prakriti*, and mostly by the vital and physical nature. The body is the instrument of the Prakriti or Nature—it obeys its own nature or it obeys the vital forces of desire, passion, etc.

But man has also a mind and, as he develops, he learns to control his vital and physical nature by his reason and by his will. This control is very partial: for the reason is often deluded by vital desires and the ignorance of the physical and it puts itself on their side and tries to justify by its ideas, reasonings or arguments their mistakes and wrong movements. Even if the reason keeps free and tells the vital or the body, "Do not do this", yet the vital and the body often follow their own movement in spite of the prohibition—man's mental will is not strong enough to compel them.

When people do sadhana, there is a higher Nature that works within, the psychic and spiritual, and they have to put their nature under the



influence of the psychic being and the higher spiritual self or of the Divine. Not only the vital and the body but the mind also has to learn the Divine Truth and obey the divine rule. But because of the first nature and its continued hold on them, they are unable at first and for a long time to prevent their nature from following the old ways—even when they know or are told from within what to do or what not to do. It is only by persistent sadhana, by getting into the higher spiritual consciousness and spiritual nature that this difficulty can be overcome; but even for the strongest and best sadhakas it takes a long time.

## IV

The heart is the centre of the emotional being, the highest part of the vital. The navel is the centre of the dynamic and sensational vital. The centre below the navel and the Muladhar command the lower vital (physical desires, small greeds, passions, etc.). The throat centre is not the vital—it is the physical mind, the expressive externalising consciousness. What you feel may be the vital taking hold of the physical mind and moving it for expression (this is the source of pride, sense of possession, ambition, anger and other passions)—but it expresses them often enough through the heart centre.

## V

The inner being is the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical with the psychic behind them. The phrase 'higher being' is used to denote the conscious self on the planes higher than the ordinary human consciousness.

## VI

It may be said of the psychic that it is that—because the psychic is in touch with the Divine in the lower nature. But the inner mind, vital and physical are a part of the universal and open to the dualities—only they are wider than the external mind, life and body, and can receive more largely and easily the divine influence.

## VII

Our inner being is in touch with universal mind, life and matter; it is a part of all that, but by that very fact it cannot be in possession of

liberation and peace. You are thinking probably of the Atman and confusing it with the inner being.

### VIII

In the navel is the main seat of the dynamic vital consciousness whose range is from the heart level to the centre below the navel (lower vital, sensational desire centre). These three mark the domain of the vital being. The centre of the psychic is behind the heart and it is through the purified emotions that the psychic most easily finds an outlet. All from the heart above is the domain of the mental being—with also three centres, one in the throat (the outward going or externalising mind), one between the eyes or rather in the middle of the forehead (the centre of vision and will) and one above communicating with the brain which is called the thousand-petalled lotus and where are centralised the thinking mind and higher intelligence communicating with the greater mind planes (illumined mind, intuition, overmind) above.

In the outer surface nature mind, psychic, vital, physical are jumbled together and it needs a strong power of introspection, self-analysis, close observation and disentanglement of the threads of thought, feeling and impulse to find out the composition of our nature and the relation and interaction of these parts upon each other. But when one goes inside, we find the sources of all this surface action and there the parts of our being are quite and clearly distinct from each other; it is as if we were a group-being, each member of the group with its separate place and function, and all directed by a central being who is sometimes in front above the others, sometimes behind the scenes.

### IX

The soul and the life are two quite different powers. The soul is a spark of the Divine Spirit which supports the individual nature; mind, life, body are the instruments for the manifestation of the nature. In most men the soul is hidden and covered over by the action of the external nature; they mistake the vital being for the soul, because it is the vital which animates and moves the body. But this vital being is a thing made up of desires and executive forces good and bad; it is the desire-soul, not the true thing. It is when the true soul (psyche) comes forward and begins first to influence and then govern the actions of the instrumental nature that man begins to overcome vital desire and grow towards a divine nature.



## X

The centres or *chakras* are seven in number:—

- (1) The thousand-petalled lotus on the top of the head.
- (2) In the middle of the forehead—the *ajnachakra*—(will, vision, dynamic thought).
- (3) Throat centre—externalising mind.
- (4) Heart-lotus—emotional centre. The psychic is behind it.
- (5) Navel—higher vital (proper).
- (6) Below navel—lower vital.
- (7) Muladhara—physical.

All these centres are in the middle of the body; they are supposed to be attached to the spinal chord; but in fact all these things are in the *sukshma deha*, though one has the feeling of their activities as if in the physical body when the consciousness is awake.

## XI

You are reasoning on the analogy of our own very cabined and limited sense-consciousness and its rather clumsy relations with the happenings in material space. What is space after all but an extension of conscious being in which Consciousness-Force builds its own surroundings? In the subtle physical plane there are, not one, but many layers of consciousness and each moves in its own being, that is to say, in its own space. I have said that each subtle plane is a conglomeration or series of worlds. Each space may at any point meet, penetrate or coincide with another; accordingly at one point of meeting or coincidence there might be several subtle objects occupying what we might rather arbitrarily call the same space, and yet they may not be in any actual relation with each other. If there is a relation created, it is the multiple consciousness of the seer in which the meeting place becomes apparent that creates it.

On the other hand, there may be a relation between objects in different regions of space correlated to each other as in the case of the gross physical object and its subtle counterpart. There you can more easily reason of relations between one space and another.

## XII

*Pātāl* is evidently here a name for the subconscious—the beings there have “no heads”, that is to say, there is there no mental consciousness;

men have all of them such a subconscious plane in their own being and from there rise all sorts of irrational and ignorant (headless) instincts, impulses, memories, etc. which have an effect upon their acts and feelings without their detecting the real source. At night many incoherent dreams come from this world or plane. The world above is the Superconscious plane of being—above the human consciousness—there are many worlds of that kind—they are divine worlds.

## XIII

The individual is not limited to the physical body—it is only the external consciousness which feels like that. As soon as one gets over this feeling of limitation one can feel first the inner consciousness which is connected with the body, but does not belong to it, afterwards the planes of consciousness surrounding the body, but part of oneself, part of the individual being, through which one is in contact with the cosmic forces and also with other beings. This last is the environmental consciousness.

## XIV

The centre of vision is between the eye-brows in the centre of the forehead. When it opens one gets the inner vision, sees the inner forms and images of things and people and begins to understand things and people from within and not only from outside, develops a power of will which also acts in the inner (Yogic) way on things and people, etc. Its opening is often the beginning of the Yogic as opposed to the ordinary mental consciousness.

## XV

I never heard of two lotuses in the heart centre; but it is the seat of two powers, in front the higher vital or emotional being, behind and concealed the soul or psychic being.

The colours of the lotuses and the numbers of petals are respectively, from bottom to top:—(1) the Mūladhara or physical consciousness centre, four petals, red; (2) the abdominal centre, six petals, deeper purple red; (3) the navel centre, ten petals, violet; (4) the heart centre, twelve petals, golden pink; (5) the throat centre, sixteen petals, grey; (6) the forehead centre between the eyebrows, two petals, white; (7) the thousand-petalled lotus above the head, blue with gold light around. The functions are,

according to our Yoga,—(1) commanding the physical consciousness and the subconscient; (2) commanding the small vital movements, the little greeds, lusts, desires, the small sense movements; (3) commanding the larger life-forces and the passions and larger desire-movements; (4) commanding the higher emotional being with the psychic deep behind it; (5) commanding expression and all externalisation of the mind movements and mental forces; (6) commanding thought, will, vision; (7) commanding the higher thinking mind and the illumined mind and opening upwards to the intuition and overmind. The seventh is sometimes or by some identified with the brain, but that is an error—the brain is only a channel of communication situated between the thousand-petalled and the forehead centre. The former is sometimes called the void centre, *sunya*, either because it is not in the body, but in the apparent void above or because rising above the head one enters first into the silence of the self or spiritual being.

## XVI

A strong vital is one that is full of life-force, has ambition, courage, great energy, a force for action or creation, a large expansive movement whether for generosity in giving or for possession and lead and domination, a power to fulfil and materialise—many other forms of vital strength are there also. It is often difficult for such a vital to surrender itself because of the sense of its own powers—but if it can do so, it becomes an admirable instrument for the Divine Work.

## XVII

No, a weak vital has not the strength to turn spiritually—and being weak, more easily falls under a wrong influence and even when it wants, finds it difficult to accept anything beyond its own habitual nature. The strong vital, when the will is there, can do it much more easily—its own central difficulty is the pride of the ego and the attraction of its powers.

The chest has more connection with the psychic than the vital. A strong vital may have a good physical, but as often it has not—it draws too much on the physical, eats it up as it were.



## THE AGE OF SRI AUROBINDO

WHEN we speak of an age which is predominantly influenced by a great personality, like the age of Buddha or the age of Socrates, we not only focus our attention on the particular personality and his achievements but feel the radical change which human consciousness underwent as a result of the appearance of that personality. It is not of course true of all personalities. There are personalities whom we never connect with any age. For example, we never speak of the age of Krishna, although we may dream of re-establishing Ram-rajya i. e. go back to Krita Yuga. That is because Krishna does not belong to any particular age: he is the creator of ages and ages but he himself is infinity. In a way, the founders of religions like Buddha or Christ also transcend the religions associated with them (a divine personality is never circumscribed by a creed), yet one may hazard a speculation that a time may come when mankind will be concerned with Buddhahood and Christhood and will overstep the creeds of Buddhism or Christianity.

To what category can we place Sri Aurobindo? It is true that, historically speaking, he has created a new age for India. He was not only the initiator of the freedom movement but was its life and soul for a time. He sowed the seed which has today grown into a mighty tree. A deep study of his life shows that he was born to achieve India's independence and one cannot miss the significance of the coincidence of the date of his birth and the formal announcement of our independence and the inauguration of independent India. Even when he left the political field, he indicated in unmistakable terms that nothing could frustrate our efforts to reach the goal: he had not the least doubt about the ultimate victory. It is also noteworthy that we followed all along not only the ideal he gave but also the technique of the struggle he outlined when he was in the political field. One has to go through his political speeches and writings to be convinced of that. And even if we went a bit astray at the climax of our struggle and missed a golden opportunity to get the substance without blood, toil and tears, it is because of our heedlessness of the counsel he gave at that crucial moment. Yet the result so far achieved cannot be minimised, nor the yet unfulfilled grand finale doubted.

If it is questioned why he has not been at the van all the time, the simple reply is that he was never anxious humanly to take the credit through mass applause, and he cared little whether his name was blazoned forth in the

press or not. Before he burst forth on the political field he was preparing himself unobserved and unknown for years. Then, even as now his personality baffled all work-a-day estimate. Even if the palm was offered to him he declined it—not simply out of sheer modesty but for a purpose which would seem inscrutable to those who keep their gaze fixed on the garish aspect of life alone.

Here is the riddle and the mystery of his personality. Here too is the knot of the theme which is being dealt with. The age of our struggle for political independence and its culmination should basically be called the age of Sri Aurobindo, as in it the ideal he gave has been realised, the renaissance which he indicated it has seen flowering and the awakening he invoked has reverberated with a hosanna of triumph. Here is what is politically spectacular, nationally soul-fulfilling and culturally the beginning of an era of efflorescence. Inwardly too it is a new dawn for a spiritual outburst like the one which marked the advent of the Aryans in this ancient land. And when we turn inward we are struck not only by the outward brilliance of the age we speak of but also get amazing glimpses of the splendour that is yet to manifest in human consciousness. Here Sri Aurobindo transcends his age and eternalises himself and we understand the import of his mission and the significance of his early stand for the independence of India.

Even in the task of India's political emancipation Sri Aurobindo took resort to the soul force and ultimately it was indeed the soul force of India which carried the nation to its goal. But have we yet understood its true import? The political independence of a country, after all, provides only the foundation for the building up or manifestation of something more sublime in the soul of a nation. That is true especially in the case of India. What India ultimately has to achieve? How in the past the great cultural transitions in her history have taken place? Looking deeply we find that these have been marked by great inner changes in the race consciousness, brought about by mighty personalities, which too have shaped India's history and made her unique among the nations. Fundamentally it has been a march towards divine realisation—a many-coursed but steady inward march, although diverted from period to period by external stress and pressure—that has vulcanised the nation through ages and given it some special fundamental characteristics in outlook and behaviour. The freedom's struggle of the present century too had in its core a spiritual inspiration, which curiously seems to be at an ebb at the hour of triumph. But the murmur of a mighty tide of regeneration can be heard; its waves are ready to break upon humanity. It may wash out all that is temporal and

ephemeral, but it is destined to saturate mankind for the sprouting of a consciousness which is divine's own.

To bring it down and get its contact with earth has been Sri Aurobindo's life's mission. We must give up the commonplace idea that as he grew in years he developed new attitudes and new ideals, i.e. he changed from scholar and poet into patriot, and the patriot turned into yogi. The central attitude has remained steady from his early years; it has grown in magnitude as he went on performing the necessary role as a teacher, a political leader and ultimately a guru and guide. And now we find him at the hour of supreme triumph as he has enabled humanity to take the spiritual birth and re-shape itself basically and radically in the light of the Spirit.

Spiritual birth—does it not sound trite and commonplace? We are familiar with the spiritual birth of an individual. But what, after all, is the spiritual birth of humanity? Who will put credence in it in this age of the atom bomb and the mighty machines and gadgets of science, destructive as well as constructive. But that nothing but a spiritual birth can ultimately save humanity, is the verdict not only of the unsophisticated oriental but also of the sophisticated occidental. Some in the west even have started feeling that there is after all a cosmic destiny for mankind and that it has to transcend the racial and credal barriers, which are its intermediate stages.

This destiny was glimpsed long ago by Sri Aurobindo, long before the recent chapters of world history started to unfold in quick succession and disastrous revelations. Long before the party bosses had any idea how things would shape ultimately, Sri Aurobindo indicated the inevitability of the socialistic and communistic experiments and their inadequacy to cure the social malaise. Long long ago he gave his verdict on the futility of the ideological zeal and mechanical device to forge world unity without seeking in heart the real source of unity and establishing it as a supreme realisation. At the same time, he did not denounce these experiments or efforts. These he knew as the human way—the historical method, half-way houses in the progress of humanity, in the realisation of the supreme ideal of unity.

But how indeed a radical change is possible? He opined that any amount of organizational tinkering would not give man the desired result. Not that nothing tangible has so far been achieved by human intellect, but the ideological landmarks of our civilization can at best be called so many finger-posts. Man has no doubt, as he claims, "enslaved" nature, but his core of being remains a void—his mind still groping for the unrealised. The external tempo of so-called progress is breath-taking indeed, but the poverty of spirit and confusion of mind also are too palpable to be ignored. Liberty,



Fraternity and Equality were the motif of two mighty revolutions, but since man has yet missed the divine basis of the three great principles, all the bloodshed and suffering seem to have gone in vain; rather it has brought about a degradation of consciousness by reaction and makes man forget the high heavens of the mind it glimpsed before and tends to keep it pegged with violence to the external and superficial. This may be called a relapse into neo-barbarism, and this reversal or cyclic retrogression seems to be the cause of the continuous tremor civilization is feeling for the last several years. The future is yet dark indeed with the premonition of an undiscernible cataclysm.

To all intents and purposes the tension is not only nerve-racking but spritually blinding. Man's soul has been caught in the meshes of vast forces out of which it finds no way of escape. Panaceas and pacts are of no avail. Sri Aurobindo visualised this crisis of civilization just at the outbreak of the first world war, and it is perhaps to tackle the mighty problem facing human destiny that he retired into seclusion and plunged into man's unfathomable depth and soared into divine infinities. It has been an unheard of, unprecedented and unique quest and his agelong sadhana has given us a knowledge which is pervasive of the whole existence, which leaves nothing unexplained, which lays bare the fundamentals for us, and above all reveals the grand divine dynamist that makes all existence—from the atom to the soul—pulse. Only an integral knowledge like this can enable us to understand the problem and convince us that any half-hearted tinkering will leave us as in bygone times within the ambit of the vicious circle. To escape it we need a new consciousness of amplitude of the soul.

Here he got the grand vision, the total vision, far beyond even a global vision, which some 2,000 years back Krishna for a moment gave to Arjuna. If we care to take recourse to Sri Aurobindo, we may well share in it and get our consciousness radically and integrally transformed. But its fulfilment does not depend on us alone, as we in our ego like to arrogate the crest. The radical change which would enable man to feel One World not only outwardly but in every cell of his body and in each atom, in each clod of the earth, is "a thing decreed" by the One Power which created not only the atom but the high heavens and which gives each its proper value, but which yet all the time keeps unruffled the hidden unity. It is given to man, individually as well as collectively, not only to realise it within himself but to manifest it in a real One World, having its root in One Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Unconsciously and half-consciously our seemingly endless struggle has all along been directed towards this goal—this estimate we can make as the integral knowledge and consciousness dawn on us,

Our practical mind may enquire, what after all are the practical results of all these? The wiseacre may scoff: we have been under the spell of the sophisticated word ever and anon, but reality, after all, is grim. Grim indeed it is phenomenally, but fundamentally, its substance has no grimness. There has been an eternal assurance about it from ancient times, in philosophies and religions, in the lives of saints and savants. With the radical change of consciousness,—that is what Sri Aurobindo says, its divinisation or the transformation of the human consciousness by the pouring down and the upsurge of the divine—we would flawlessly realise the dream which the anarchist has vaguely dreamt only as regards outward life. We would have individuality at its fullness—an individuality that will be law unto itself but in tune with cosmic laws. Collectively, we shall have communism (in the real sense of the term), which the present-day communist, immersed in the outward and material aspect of life, disastrously distorts—a communism manifested out of 'all-this-is-Vasudeva'-consciousness, in which each soul identifies itself with other souls (for all is the expression of One), feels their inmost needs and allows infinite individual expression, which however does not attempt to steamroll them into one pattern. With the manifestation of this cosmic consciousness,—not miraculously all on a sudden but gradually—and its growing realisation by individuals, will vanish, like a bad dream, the feverish chaos that is present day humanity, and necessarily will vanish for ever war, greed, possessiveness and all that is the brood of darkness, i.e. ignorance and semi-ignorance. Humanity's future lies definitely with the persons in whom this consciousness will manifest, first in individuals, then in groups and lastly even on a mass scale perhaps, as mentality has now unfolded.

This indeed was the basic Indian realisation, to which the Vedas and Upanishads gave expression mystically in times of yore and which gave our Aryan forefathers the spiritual impetus to leave their mark on various aspects of life. It was left to Sri Aurobindo to rediscover the great truths which were often cryptically expressed in the ancient texts and lay bare their hidden import and fit them in the gamut of the new life, which he calls divine life. It was necessary for India, the mother of civilizations, to be free from the distorting influences of other peoples and rediscover her soul. That aim has been achieved. We have entered a new era, but our souls must turn towards the realisation of the supreme ideal for which humanity has evolved from animality. Transcending animality and rationality man needs finding a new status in divinity, which will transform animality and rationality. India of all lands is evidently the chosen field

for this divine experiment and is destined to give birth to a new divinised humanity, which will by precept, example and life force, bring about the radical transformation in mankind.

Are we not then justified in saying that this is indeed the age of Sri Aurobindo, not only for our own country but for whole humanity? But this is an age which should not be delimited by our accustomed mental computation. Unlike other ages it has no fixed measure in time. It is an age-less age, one may say—an eternity into which humanity seems to be entering, in which each throb of life will have the sanction of eternity.

PROMODE KUMAR SEN

## EVOLVE OR PERISH

**M**AN is a product of Nature. Everything, including him, has had common origin in Matter. Life manifested in Matter, and Mind appeared in Life in the course of evolution. He can, through the ages, trace his beginnings from the single cell and the amoeba. He is a part of the same scheme by which rivers take to certain courses, wild trees grow in forests and tiny lives appear in a cesspool.

That Man was not a special, unique, exclusive creation of the Absolute, but is the product of Time, was the inescapable conclusion which shook the complacency of the Western world in 1859 on the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Darwin declared that "the species have been modified during a long course of descent...chiefly through the natural selection of numerous successive, slight, favourable variations; aided in an important manner by the inherited effects of the use and disuse of parts; and in an unimportant manner...by the direct action of external conditions, and by variations which seem to us in our ignorance to arise spontaneously." The doctrine of evolution was not new even to the Western world. But the mass of evidence with which it was supported settled the point definitively. In 1871 came out Darwin's "Descent of Man" which concluded that Man is descended from the ape!

While Darwinism gave rise to opposing camps, it provided the much needed stimulus to scientific thought. And though since Darwin's days many distinguished men—Bergson, Lloyd Morgan, Alexander, Shaw and McDougal, to name the most representative—have held views not similar



to his, the main conclusion that evolution *has* taken place is now an integral part of the scientific thought.

Darwinism raised a storm, for its implications were inescapable: the wholesale rejection of the dogmatic, exoteric theology. With the hard crust of dogma was scrapped, however, the last sheen of conscience, which is the only bridge between Man and the Infinite. The pale, reflected light of the intellect took over, but it could not speak with the assurance of the genuine light within—however feeble—of which even Kant had given evidence. For while the latter could give certainty because of its identity with Truth, intellect could only point to the relations among the manifestations of Truth for ascertainable knowledge. The upshot was that the foundations of Good were shaken in the West among the high priests of that civilisation—the men of Science. They could scrape together certain working principles for their own conduct, but what percolated to the masses below—who take their cultural cue from the aristocracy—was a general downward trend. Materialism had no doubt its wholesome effect in that it intensified the scientific effort, but at the same time it undermined the forces of true progress. As we know, it is this civilisation which carried its influence to the four corners of the world. The clash of the forces of Good and Evil in the first World War was something unavoidable. The saner elements the world over tried, after that disaster, to come together, but failed, for the appeal was made again to the light of the subordinate intellect and not to the free Spirit. Side by side with the overt signs of chaos went on the decay within of which the immense popularity of psychoanalysis during the 'twenties and the 'thirties was an unmistakable sign. The analytic technique could cure—with whatever success it claimed for itself—but could not prevent universal neurosis. Jung did go beyond its scope, but fought shy of the way to which it led him, the only way in which the integration of the human personality could be ensured, for the simple reason that, taken to its logical conclusion, it would have led to the transvaluation of all values of the European civilisation. The European ego was too domineering to permit such an impertinence. The second showdown that the powers of darkness forced upon the world in 1939, demonstrated the utter failure of scientific mind and thought in the sphere of human conduct and life. The Evil forces suffered defeat again, but they have left a legacy in the shape of disastrous weapons of war and the atom bomb. If it is true that wars begin in the minds of men, then the third World War started long ago. We know how disastrous this is going to be. A global Hiroshima may well be its consequence. The failure of Man as master of this planet will thus be complete.

The obvious alternative then is that the tide of retrogression must be stemmed. And this can only be done by helping the evolutionary process to a higher notch where the present conflicts may be reconciled, and the foundation for the future of mankind laid. The emergence of Life in Matter or Mind in Life implies the potentiality of the higher in the lower, and indicates the line of genuine progress, namely, the manifestation of the higher in the course of evolution. Despite all pretensions to the contrary, Man is something unfinished, and the difference between the lowest and the highest of the race now as in the historical process shows that Man is the precursor of Superman.

When Nietzsche cried that Man must be surpassed, though he diagnosed the ills of the modern man correctly to some extent, the cure he offered could only serve one purpose—hastening the end of the patient.

Biologist Huxley at the conclusion of his "Evolution: The Modern Synthesis" says: "The future of progress in evolution is the future of man. The future of man, if it is to be progress and not merely a standstill or degeneration, must be guided by a deliberate purpose." The biologist's conception of the future of evolution consists in raising "The brain's level of performance—in acuteness of perception, memory, synthetic grasp and intuition, analytic capacity, mental energy, creative power, balance and judgment." The need for the future evolution of man is thus recognised on all hands, but how this may be brought about is with them mostly a matter of conjectures.

It is here that Sri Aurobindo steps in to lead humanity on the road to progress. His lead is not merely of an idealist, but of one who while following the landmarks left by the greatest of the race, has made a track—wide and sunny—to the goal. However, the one-way journeying of those who had gone over the path before is to him bare of true achievement, as leaving this world entirely unregenerate it could only be interpreted as a personal and, in a way, selfish endeavour of little significance to the race. Moreover, the path was overgrown with weeds and lost to others. Leaving the metaphor, what Sri Aurobindo says to the modern man is this: Let it be clearly understood, he tells him, that progress in the world is not possible without a sea change within man himself. The modern man should turn his gaze inward and discover the Spirit, which, and not mind, is the real sovereign of his being. He can establish contact with the spirit that upholds his being by going deep down into his heart (the centre of his being) and helping the psyche come forward. This can be done by calming the surface movements of desire and taking a plunge into the profound. Similarly, he should create a link with the root of his being

in the Transcendent by silencing the mental processes and making the mind receptive in the condition of peace. With psyche forward will proceed the purification of the vital being, and with the mind open to the Truth, Light and Force of the Transcendent will it become a true functionary in the scheme of becoming. The Higher mind, the Illumined Mind and the Overmind are the wayside halts on the road beyond mind which Sri Aurobindo has clearly demarcated; and beyond the Overmind is the Supermind, the plenipotentiary of the Divine, the *Sachchidananda*.

The ascent to the higher reaches of mind is half the work; the other half is to bring down their Truth, Force and Delight and to transform the nature of mind and, in turn, of the lower being. It is this transmutation that can change the present outlook of man, that can invest him with new powers and faculties, an entire joy in existence, the complete possession of Truth that is possible in union with the Supermind, and universality; and by laying the foundation of peace and harmony not only save him from the danger of self-annihilation that he faces today but open a glorious chapter in terrestrial existence—the chapter of the Life Divine.

N. N. KAUL

Let your *aspiration* for *progress* be *cheerful* and you will get the *Ananda* of *progress*.

★

Let the *Divine Cheerfulness* suffuse your *work*. So your mind will be *purified* and this will bring the *beginning* of *Realisation*.

★

*Agni* steadily burning within will firmly found in you *faithfulness* and a *devoted loving consecration* to the Divine.

This is the surest way to *Transformation*.

THE MOTHER



## A DEFENCE OF INDIAN CULTURE\*

TWO things especially distinguish the normal European mind,—we must leave aside some great souls and some great thinkers or some moments or epochs of abnormal religiosity and look at the dominant strain,—and they are, always, the cult of the inquiring, defining, effective, practical reason and the cult of life. The great high tides of European civilisation, Greek culture, the Roman world before Constantine, the Renaissance, the modern age with its two colossal idols, Industrialism and physical Science, have come to the West on the strong ascending urge of these two powers. When they have ebbed, the European mind has entered into much confusion. Christianity failed to spiritualise Europe deeply, whatever it may have done towards humanising it in certain ethical directions, because it ran counter to these two master instincts, denied the reason and put its anathema on the satisfied or strenuous fullness of life. But the great ages of Asia—in India the high Vedic beginning, the grand spiritual stir of the Upanishads, the flood of Buddhism, Vedanta, Sankhya, the Puranic and Tantric religions, the flowering of Vaishnavism and Shaivism in the southern kingdoms—have come in on a surge of spiritual light, a climbing of the religious or the religio-philosophic mind to its own heights, its noblest or its richest realities; it was then that intellect, thought, poetry, the arts, the material life flowered into splendour, while the ebbing of spirituality brought in on the contrary the weakness of these other powers, periods of fossilisation, tracts of decline, even beginnings of decay. This is a clue which we have to hold to, if we would understand the great lines of divergence between the East and the West. Towards the spirit if not to it man must rise or he misses his upward curve of strength; but there are different ways of approach. Europe must, it would seem, go through the life and the reason and find spiritual truth by their means as a crown and a revelation, she cannot at once take the kingdom of heaven by violence, as the saying of Christ would have men do. The attempt confuses and obscures her reason, is combated by her life instincts and leads to revolt and negation. But Asia,<sup>1</sup> at any rate India lives naturally by a spiritual

\* Reprinted from *The Arya*, Vol. V, 1919

<sup>1</sup> Modern Japan may be alleged as an instance to the contrary. Modern Japan has grown in political power and in industry; but what of her inner powers of mind? Are they not waiting for a spiritual renascence to repeat the glories of her great Shinto and Buddhistic ages?

influx from above, which brings with it a spiritual evocation of the higher powers of mind and life. The two continents are two sides of the integral orb of humanity and each must move to whatever progress or culmination the spirit in humanity seeks, by the law of its being, its Dharma. A one-sided world would be the poorer for its uniformity. That is a truth which the violent Indian assailant of a materialistic Europe or the contemptuous enemy or cold disparager of Asiatic or Indian culture agree in ignoring. There can be here no real question of barbarism and civilisation,—all masses of men are barbarians labouring to civilise themselves,—but one of the differences necessary to the completeness of the growing orb of human culture.

Meanwhile the divergence gives rise to a constant opposition of outlooks in religion and in most other matters, which brings with it more or less of an incapacity for mutual understanding. The emphasis of the Western mind is on life, the outer life above all, the things that are grasped, visible, tangible, and on the inner life only as an intelligent reflection of the outer world, with the reason for a firm putter of things into shape, an intelligent critic, builder, refiner of the external materials offered by Nature; the present use of living, in this life and for this life, is its whole preoccupation, the present existence of the individual, the continuous physical existence and developing mind and knowledge of humanity. Even of religion the West is apt to demand that it shall subordinate itself to this utility. The Greek and the Roman look on religious cult as a sanction for the life of the "polis" or a force for the just firmness and stability of the State. The Middle Ages, when the Christian idea was at its height, were an interregnum, a period during which the Western mind was trying to assimilate in its emotion and intelligence an oriental ideal, though it never succeeded in firmly living it, just as for Asia the present moment is an interregnum dominated by an attempt to assimilate in its intellect and life in spite of a rebellious soul and temperament the western ideal and outlook; but even then the Christian idea marked in its purity by the emphasis of its introspective tendency and an uncompromising other-worldliness had to compromise with this demand of the occidental temperament and in doing that it lost its own real kingdom. And finally the genuine temperament of the West triumphed in an increasing rationalising and secularisation of religion. Religion became more and more a pale and ever thinning shadow pushed aside into a corner of the being and lucky if not entirely exiled, while outside the doors of the vanquished Church marched on their victorious way the triumphant secular pomps of the life and reason.

The tendency to secularism is a necessary consequence of the cult of life and reason. Ancient Europe did not separate religion and life, but that

was because it had no need for the separation, since its religion, once it had got rid of the oriental element of the mysteries, was a secular institution which did not look beyond a certain supraphysical sanction and aid to the government of this life, and even then the final tendency was to philosophise and reason away the relics of the original religious spirit, exile such shadow as remained of the brooding wings of a suprarational mystery and get into the clear sunlight of the logical and practical reason. But modern Europe, the more effectually to shake off the obsession of the Christian idea, which like all oriental religious thought claims to make religion commensurate with life and to spiritualise, against whatever obstacles may be opposed to it by the unregenerate vital nature of the animal man, the whole being, separated religion from the life, from philosophy, art and science, from politics, from the greater part of the action of society; it secularised and rationalised too the ethical being so that it might stand in itself and have no need of any aid from any religious sanction. It left religion an impoverished system of belief and ceremony to which one might or might not subscribe with very little difference to the march of the human mind and life, for its penetrating and colouring power had been reduced to a faint minimum, a superficial pigmentation of dogma, sentiment and emotion.

Even the poor little corner that was left, intellectualism insisted on flooding as much as possible with the light of reason; it has been bent on reducing not only the infrarational but equally the suprarational refuges of the religious spirit. The old pagan polytheistic symbolism which had clothed the ancient idea of a divine presence and greater supraphysical life and being in all Nature and in every particle of life and matter and in all animal being and in all the mental action of man,—an idea which to the secularist reason is only an intellectualised animism,—had been swept aside. The Divinity had left the earth and lived far aloof and remote in other worlds, in a celestial heaven of saints and immortal spirits. But why any other worlds? We will admit, said the progressing intellect, only this material world to which our reason and sense bear witness and, for the rest, a vague idea of spiritual being without a habitation to satisfy the chilled remnants of the old spiritual sense or illusion,—Theism or else a rationalised Christianity. Or why that even? A Reason or Power, called God for want of a better name, represented by the moral and physical Law in the material universe is surely sufficient for a rational mind; so we get Deism. Or why then any God at all? The reason and the senses give no witness to God, can make of Him at most a plausible hypothesis; but there is no need of an unsubstantial hypothesis, Nature is enough and the sole thing of which we have knowledge. Thus by a quite inevitable process we have got to the atheistic or agnostic cult of secularism,



and there reason and life may henceforward take their foundation and work well satisfied,—if only that inconvenient veiled ambiguous infinite Something behind will leave them alone for the future!

A temperament, an outlook of this kind must necessarily be impatient of any such thing as an earnest straining after the suprarational and the infinite, though it may tolerate some moderate play of these fine hallucinations as an innocent indulgence of the speculative mind or the artistic imagination. Asceticism, other-worldliness are abhorrent to its temperament and fatal to its outlook; life is a thing to be possessed and enjoyed rationally or forcefully,—this earthly life, the one thing we know and are concerned with; at most a moderate intellectual and ethical asceticism is permissible, the simple life, plain living and high thinking; but the ecstatic spiritual asceticism is an offence to the reason. Pessimism of the vitalistic kind may be allowed, for it admits that life though an evil has to be lived and does not cut at the roots of the rational outlook; but the obvious rational standpoint is to take life as it is and make the most of it, practically for the best ordering of its mixed good and evil, or ideally with some hope of a rational perfection. If spirituality is to have any meaning, then, it can only signify the aim at a lofty intelligence, will, beauty, good, morality in high labour to make the best of this life that is, but not vainly looking beyond to some unhuman, unattainable, infinite or absolute satisfaction. If religion is to survive, let its function be to serve this kind of spiritual aim, to govern conduct, to give beauty and purity to our living, but let it keep within the bounds of the intelligence and the practical reason; let it minister to a sane and virile spirituality. This description,—it being understood that the main strands are isolated in it and departures ignored, although in all human nature there must be departures often of an extreme kind, since in each man there are the possibilities of all humanity,—would not, I think, be an unfair or exaggerated description of the persistent ground and characteristic turn of the western temperament and of its outlook as it stands self-fulfilled before it proceeds to that deflection or that self-exceeding to which man is inevitably moved when he reaches the acme of his normal nature. For he must either grow or stagnate and cease and disintegrate; for him until he has found all himself, there is no static abiding.

But when this western mind is confronted with the still surviving force of Indian religion, thought, culture, it finds that here all its standards are denied or exceeded, all that it has rejected is still held in honour. Here is a philosophy which founds itself on the immediate reality of the Infinite, on the pressing claim of the Absolute, not as a thing to speculate about, but as a real presence and a constant Power which demands the soul of man. Here

is a mentality which sees God at the beginning, God in the middle, God at the end, God everywhere, God in Nature and man and animal and inanimate thing,—mere metaphysicised animism according to official reports, and we all know that official reports cannot err or lie,—and worst of all, all this not as a permissible poetical play of the imagination not to be taken too seriously by life, but as a thing to be lived, realised, put at the back even of outward action, with whole disciplines systematised for the purpose which men still practise and whole lives given up to this pursuit of the Infinite, the Absolute, the supreme Person, the universal Godhead. And to pursue this immaterial aim men are still content to abandon the outward life and society and all that has to a rational mind a substantial and ascertainable value. Here is a country which is still heavily coloured with the ochre tint of the garb of the Sannyasin, where the Beyond is still preached as a truth and men have a living belief in other worlds and reincarnation and a whole army of antique ideas whose truth is quite unverifiable by the instruments of physical Science, and where the experiences of Yoga are held to be as true or more true than the experiments of the laboratory. A thinking of things evidently unthinkable since the rational western mind has ceased to think about them; and there is an attempt even to make this thing the highest flight of life itself, its very goal, and even a governing force, a shaping power in art and culture and conduct, in things which the rational mind tells us they ought logically not to touch, since life and art and culture and conduct can only be founded on the intellectual reason and the practical environment and the truths and suggestions of physical Nature. There is thus a very apparent gulf between the two mentalities which looks unbridgeable. Or rather, though the Indian mind can understand well enough, even when it does not share, the positivist type of occidental mentality, it is itself to the latter a thing abnormal and unintelligible.

When we come to the effects of the Indian religio-philosophical standpoint on life, the occidental critic finds that as his reason is offended by this suprarational, to him antirational, urge, so too all the strongest instincts of his temperament are violently shocked by their own direct contrasts and opposites. Life, the thing on which he puts an entire and unquestioning value, is here questioned, seems to him to be belittled and discouraged, and to a certain extent is so by the extreme consequences of the Indian outlook or inlook. He finds asceticism rampant, at the head of things, casting its shade on the vital instincts and calling man to exceed the life of the body and even the life of the mental will and intelligence. He himself lays an enormous stress upon force of personality, the individual will, the apparent man; he finds here an opposing stress in a growth towards

impersonality, the merging of the individual in the universal, a growing or breaking beyond the apparent. The flowering of the mental and vital ego or at most its subservience to the larger ego of the community is his cultural idea; here this ego is regarded as the chief obstacle to soul perfection and its place is proposed to be taken not by the concrete communal ego, but by some thing inward, abstract, transcendental, some supramental, supraphysical Reality. His own type is that of the rajasic, kinetic, pragmatic, active man, and thought for him turns always to action and has little value except for the sake of action or as a satisfaction of mental activity; here the type proposed for admiration is the self-possessing sattwic man for whom calm thought, knowledge and the inner life are the things of the greatest importance and action is chiefly of consequence for its effects on the growth of the inner being. And there is too, very prominent, the quietism which looks forward to the cessation or Nirvana of all thought and action in a perpetual peace. It is not surprising that he should look upon these contrasts with much dissatisfaction, repugnance, a recoil of antipathy.

But at any rate there is in these things something noble and lofty, however remote they may seem to his understanding. He can disparage them as false, antirational, depressing, but not denounce them as evil and ignoble, except by such misrepresentations as some of those we have noted in Mr. Archer's more irresponsible strictures. They may be signs of an antique or an antiquated, but are certainly not the fruits of a barbaric culture. But when he surveys the forms of the religion which they enlighten and animate, it does look to him as if here there was a pure barbarism. For here is abundance of everything of which he has so long been steadily emptying religion in his own culture and been well content to call that emptiness reformation. He sees a gigantic, to him a monstrous polytheism, a superabundance of what to his intelligence seems rank superstition. The Hindu is popularly credited with a belief in thirty crores and more of gods, as many inhabitants for all the many heavens as men for this single earthly peninsula India, and has no objection to adding, if need be, to this mighty multitude. Here are temples, images, a priesthood, a mass of unintelligible rites and ceremonies, the daily repetition of Sanskrit mantras and prayers, some of them of a prehistoric creation, a belief in all kinds of supraphysical beings and forces, saints, gurus, holy days, vows, offerings, sacrifice, a constant reference of life to powers and influences of which there can be no physical evidence instead of a rational scientific dependence on the material laws which alone govern the existence of mortal beings. It is to him an unintelligible chaos; it is animism; it is a monstrous folk-lore. The meaning which Indian thought puts upon these things, their spiritual



sense, escapes him altogether or it leaves him incredulous or else strikes his mind as a subtly futile useless symbolism. And not only is the cult and belief of this antiquated and mediaeval kind, but it is not kept in its proper place. Instead of putting religion into an unobtrusive and ineffective corner, the Indian mind has the pretension, the preposterous pretension which rational man has outgrown, of filling the whole of life with the power of religion.

It is difficult to convince the too positive average European intelligence which has "outgrown" the religious mentality or is only struggling back towards it after a not yet liquidated bankruptcy of rationalistic materialism, to appreciate the meaning of these Indian religious forms. They are, it has been well phrased, rhythms of its spirit, but one who misses the spirit, must necessarily miss too the connection of the spirit and the rhythm. The gods of this worship are, as every Indian knows, names, forms, personalities, aspects of the one Divinity; each Godhead is a form or derivation or dependent power of the supreme Trinity, each Goddess a form of the universal Shakti. But to the logical European mind monotheism, polytheism, pantheism are irreconcilable warring dogmas; to believe in a one Divine Being superior to cosmos who is all cosmos and who lives in many forms of godhead, is to it a hotch-potch, mush, confusion of ideas; for synthesis is not the forte of this analytic and logical mind. The image to the Hindu is a physical symbol of the supraphysical and a basis for the meeting between the embodied mind and sense of man and the supraphysical power or being he worships; but the average European mind has small faith in disembodied entities and, if they exist, it would put them away into a category apart, a separate existence, another world; such a nexus between the physical and supraphysical is to its view a meaningless subtlety. The rites, ceremonies, system of cult and worship can only be understood if it is realised that Hinduism is in the first place a non-dogmatic inclusive religion,—it would have taken even Islam and Christianity into itself, if they had tolerated the process,—and, secondly, that religion, if it is to be a reality for the mass of men, must address itself to the whole of our being, and not only to the suprarational and the rational parts, but to all the others, the imagination, the emotions, the aesthetic sense, even the very instincts of our half subconscious being. It must lead man to the suprarational, the spiritual truth, it must take the aid of the reason, but it cannot afford to neglect to call Godwards the rest of our complex mentality. And it must take each man where he stands, spiritualise him through what he can feel and not at once force on him something which he cannot yet grasp as true and living. That is the sense and aim of all those

parts of Hinduism which are specially stigmatised as irrational or anti-rational by the positivist reason. But this plain necessity the European mind has failed to understand. It insists on "purifying" religion—by the reason and not by the spirit, on reforming it—by the reason and not by the spirit. We know what were the results of this kind of purification and reformation in Europe; the infallible outcome of that doctoring has been first to impoverish and then slowly to kill religion.

The accusation of a want of ethical content, monstrous and false as it is, can also perhaps be explained by a characteristic misunderstanding. In fact, Hindu thought and literature in general might almost be accused of a tyrannously pervading ethical obsession. The idea of the Dharma is, next to the idea of the Infinite, its major chord. There is no ethical idea which it has not entertained, stressed, put in its most ideal and imperative form, enforced by teaching, injunction, parable, artistic creation, formative examples,—truth, honour, loyalty, fidelity, courage, chastity, love, long-suffering, harmlessness, forgiveness, compassion, benevolence, beneficence, these are its common themes, in its view the very stuff of a right human life, the essence of the dharma of man. Neither Buddhism, nor Jainism, nor Hinduism is at all inferior in ethical teaching and practice to any other religion or ethical system. For the practice of these virtues in older times there is abundant internal and foreign evidence; and a considerable stamp of them still remains in spite of much degeneracy, even though some of those manlier virtues have been depressed which only flourish healthily on the soil of freedom. The legend to the contrary began, I think, in the minds of scholars with a Christian bias who were misled by the stress which Indian philosophy lays on knowledge rather than action as the means of salvation; they forgot or did not see that ethical perfection is presupposed as the first step towards the divine knowledge which cannot come to the impure mind and that knowledge of the truth means for the Indian thought a life according to the truth and does not consist in mere intellectual assent or recognition. But, besides, morality is for the western mind mostly a thing of outward conduct; for the Indian mind it is that, but only as a means and sign for a soul-state. It does not, except incidentally, string together a number of commandments for observance, a table of moral laws, but enjoins the ethical purity of the mind with action as its outward index. It says strongly enough, "Thou shouldst not kill," but it insists more firmly on the injunction, "Thou shalt not hate, thou shalt not yield to anger, malice, or greed" which are the roots of killing. Hinduism besides admits relative standards. Non-injuring is the very highest, *ahimsa parama dharma*, but it does not lay it as a physical rule on the warrior, but insistently demands from him mercy, chivalry,

respect for the weak, the unarmed, the vanquished, the prisoner, the wounded, the fugitive, and so escapes the unpracticality of a too absolutist rule for all life. A misunderstanding of this inwardness and this wise relativity is perhaps responsible for much misrepresentation. The western ethicist likes to have a high standard as a counsel of perfection which is honoured too often more by the breach than by the observance; Indian ethics puts an equally high, often higher standard, but admits stages of progress and tries to moralise as much as possible those who are not yet capable of the highest ethical being.

It is evident now whence these attacks on the Indian religio-philosophical culture take their rise. But we have still to see whether the farther charge by which they justify themselves, can itself at all be justified, namely, that Indian culture depresses life and the will and gives no great or vigorous power, no high incentive, no fortifying and ennobling motive for a human living.

*(To continue)*

SRI AUROBINDO

Whoever clings to desires and weaknesses of the flesh, the cravings and passions of the vital in its turbulent ignorance, the dictates of his personal mind unsilenced and unilluminated by a greater knowledge, cannot find the true inner law and is heaping obstacles in the way of the divine fulfilment. Whoever is able to detect and renounce these obscuring agencies and to discern and follow the true guide within and without, will discover the spiritual law and reach the goal of the Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SYNTHESIS OF YOGA



## APPRECIATION OF POETRY:

### PREJUDICES, PRINCIPLES, PERVERSITIES

WHOEVER wishes to catch the essence of poetry must throw aside all his pet prejudices about both the matter and manner of art. No doubt, poetry of a particular type holds a special appeal for him, but that should not debar him from distilling the last drop of enjoyment from other types of verse or lead him to label them artistic failures. For, all art is an attempt to express the various forces of man's being in a beautifully measured way, and so long as the measure of beauty is somehow obtained it would be preposterous as well as pitifully self-privative to denounce, from the artistic standpoint, a poem for the nature of the force expressed in it.

The Victorians could not relish the beginning of Swinburne's *Anactoria*, where the poet voices Sappho's yearning in a mood of cruel and morbid exultation for the body of the girl Anactoria whom she loves—perhaps the most sadistic cry in English literature:

I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,  
Intense device and superflux of pain;  
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake  
Life at thy lips and leave it there to ache;  
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,  
Intolerable interlude and infinite ill;  
Relapse and reluctance of the breath,  
Dumb tunes and shuddering semi-tones of death...  
Take thy limbs living and new-mould with these  
A lyre of many faultless agonies.

Though the passage is perverse, the language gives us no mere pathology bluntly describing a "complex". There is a heat of the imagination captured in verbal appositeness and a masterfully modulated rhythm, the violence is rich enough with a deft control for a strong though not throughout a great beauty to shine through the savage motif. And where sense and sound have been mated in precise and moving words with a result of beauty, poetry as such undeniably exists, whatever the theme and style.

Here, of course, it is the theme that proved a rock of offence: the style is not startlingly unexpected—beyond the freshness and vividness indispensable to poetic activity. No sudden gaps are left in the language,

the phrases are not pitched to the point of making them stand without any marked transition-link—compact stepping stones set at difficult distances for a series of leaps from author to reader. Such a style may not prove everybody's delight—at least it did not please Ruskin when Browning indulged in it; yet to reject it just because it is wanting in effect shading off into effect is to take too facilely the intuitive faculty in us on which the poetic moment always impinges with its open or its subtle concords. And where the intuitive faculty is concerned, there can also be no rigid ruling about the texture of language any more than about the movement of it. The intuitive faculty recognises indeed a norm which persists, but the persistence is in the thick of diversities and never clings to a monotonous or single-track method. Many shades and grades of words must be permitted: the vocabulary of Donne need not be cast out by Milton's, the Hopkinsian by that of Bridges. To be able to appreciate the poetic moment—even while noting the absence of one's favourite themes and turns and tones—constitutes, besides an enviably large capacity for enjoyment, the soul of criticism.

Catholicity of outlook, however, must avoid being a weak tolerance: in our zeal to show an impartial mind we must not let our aesthetic acumen be blunted by the interestingness or momentousness of the subject, the sincerity or novelty of the treatment. Though we may value Wordsworth's psychological observations, he can never be forgiven for enfeebling his discoveries by deficient technique or setting marvellous lines to voyage, lonely and depressed, half their freshness lost, through a strange waste of watery verse like much of *Prelude*—in the literal and most damnatory connotation of the term, blank verse. Similarly, just because we do not judge from personal temperament, *The Waste Land* of T. S. Eliot's labyrinthine cross-lit fitfulness need not be accepted as a poetic paradise. In every department of art, what is required is not only "significant form" nor, as the modern temperament inclines to believe, a mere energy glorying in its own caprice: what is fundamental is a thrill of significant form, spontaneous energy in love with meaning and measure. And great poetry, like any other art attaining greatness, is a rapture, a peace or a pain, according to its creator's mood, in which a significance is shaped out with a glow and a tingle as if some secret from beyond the outer consciousness pushed through, bringing with it splendours and sweetnesses and poignancies far wider and deeper than the common range to which that consciousness is accustomed. Words become wings and in each movement of sound and sense some fiat as of a god strikes us, asserting by means of any part of man's being and through any mode of word-design and pattern of rhythm a unique inevitable loveliness.

No better example, perhaps, of a certain style of great poetry can be produced than the closing lines of the quotation from Swinburne:

...Take thy limbs living and new-mould with these  
A lyre of many faultless agonies.

Their excellence is wrought, on the side of rhythm, by a keen yet sublime movement disposing stresses irregularly in the first line to indicate the change spoken of there, and in the second approximating as closely as possible to the normal iambic base in order to represent the strangely flawless result of the new-moulding: within this general music there is a play of assonances and alliterations, the press forward and suspense of sound echoing the significance, the long lingering last syllable of "agonies" that creates an intensifying effect. On the verbal side, the success is due to the surprise of the image-word "lyre" which not only gives the idea a concrete quality but also tunes it to its extreme pitch of expression through the most rhapsodical figure possible to it, and the epithet "faultless" glorifies in a vein equally original the ravage caused by that violent hunger for physical beauty, a ravage this spell-binding beauty bears like a melody in which pain has found a perfect voice. The meaning is demoniac but chiselled with strokes which bring forth poetic greatness from a crude passion; for this greatness arises when the light of a new imaginative idea clarifies an emotion and a rare emotional heat vivifies an imaginative idea and their interfusion is then reflected, rather embodied, in a just arrangement of words remarkable for their accuracy and their combined vibration ringing apt changes on a fixed base of metre.

Such a description is not likely to go down the modernist gullet, for it seethes not at all with the anarchy in aesthetic values that is behind modernist poetry. Indeed, this poetry is so many different things that it is difficult to catch its essence in a definition—unless one says that it is a poetry of revolt against everything that can be revolted against! Each poet fixes upon a bugbear from the past and performs a dance of destruction on its body. One expresses his contempt for the traditional method of arranging lines, by distributing words and phrases in drunken zigzags across the page; another is less fantastic to the eye but yaps barbarically in the ear by a supreme disdain for metrical rhythm and imaginative nobility; a third believes in presenting raw sensation or incoherent chunks of the subconscious as a legitimate sample of art; a fourth less typically abreast of the times is yet intolerant of the old poetic purple and insists on the simple life to the point of colloquial drabness. All these and many other tendencies



have a centre of gravity, so to speak, amidst their irresponsible exaggerations, and some genuine success is perceptible in each departure from the norm; but a large amount of modernist poetry revolts in no other sense than that it is revolting to one's finest instincts.

The cult of the capricious, the violent, the crude cannot lead anywhere, whether practised with simple jerks or complicated jumps; not even when a semblance of formal dignity is kept and there is no cutting up of lines and phrases and even words to make a Cummings-holiday. We cannot expect even a Masfield to come off with flying colours where a Browning has failed: Browning with his vehement genius tried the effects of expressive cacophony and proved to his own cost that, though he could sometimes distil a pungent dramatic flavour out of them, pure poetry was in the majority of experiments bound to suffer a dissolution. In fact, to suggest the harsh or the grotesque it is sufficient to employ a certain image-power coupled with strength of diction without resorting to ugly phraseology, clotting one's consonants and loading the back of one's metre to a breaking point. Sandberg and his free-versifying tribe produce better work than the cacophonists, but Whitman whose elemental *enthousiasmos* none of the recent free-versifiers have matched revealed the high-water mark possible to the new medium and at the same time the sure though subtle loss it involved when used to voice the "immortal longings" of life. He had the eagle's heart, the eagle's vision, but without the wings of metrical rhythm he was, on the whole, baulked of his right to the sheer zenith—for, metre by its marked flux and reflux endows verbal music with a distinctness, a stability, a haunting power, a magic memorableness, whereby the idea and emotion expressed acquire a definite and sustained charm of vitality which evokes more easily than any other rhythm a strong sympathetic correspondence in the reader. As regards the right of the chaotic, in the subconscious or in sensation, to the poetic domain, one half of the truth was touched by the Symbolist Movement in France which attempted to exploit the value of strange associations and intermingling sense-suggestions free from the intellect's logical and explanatory devices—but not without the aid of beautiful rhythm and metre: in short, a new method for giving poetic pleasure. The other half which even those arch-symbolists Mallarmé and Rimbaud often missed was that the flow of associations and symbols, if restricted to form a particular poem, must carry in it by virtue of that restriction a coherence which can be perceived as however subdued a single effect: some undercurrent must convey itself to the reader, providing a means of instinctively feeling if not logically understanding the poem as a whole. What the present unintelligibles forget is both sides of the truth:

they crush completely the poetic art by heaping a Pelion of inharmony on an Ossa of incoherence.

Mistaken also in their extremism are those who, while preserving the metrical basis and avoiding verbal savagery as well as imaginative freakishness, yet object to any transcendence of the conversational turn and temper. The latter is no defect in itself; what the poet has to be on guard against is the bathetic or the prosaic. Professor Campbell has observed that Homer could speak of Ulysses' dog Argos as being full of lice without sacrificing all that Arnold claimed for him—rapidity, simplicity, nobility—because the phrase in Greek had a rich rhythm and dignity side by side with its fluent naturalness: "full" there is *enipleios* and "lice" *kunoraisteôn*—both polysyllables combining resonance and splendour with a clear delicacy as the same description in English most flatly refuses to do. And if poetry is to be something finer than mere metrical prose—that is to say, not an artificiality—it must seek a mode of utterance unlike conversation if the common idiom proves incapable of answering its noble needs. Phonetic values are indispensable to versecraft and in this respect the arrangement of words must be studied no less than their individual quality, so that at the same time the meaning emerges effectively and the rhythm builds itself to a fresh pattern without losing grip on the metrical beat as it dangerously tends to do in the efforts of Abercrombie and Drinkwater to equate blank verse with oral speech. The poet has often to employ a delicate spell of remoteness from the ordinary language, for his art consists in a certain specialness of expressive mood which goes home by a rhythmical lift and intensity in phrase and metre. He may be straightforward and simple and even conversational provided he conjures up that subtle strangeness. Wordsworth did so at his best and Shakespeare almost always when he wanted to say anything worth saying in a swift and clear fashion which was less crowded with images than his usual style. But the important principle in poetry is not plainness, conversational or otherwise, though that has a legitimate place: it is the artistic treatment which matters. To eschew vague ornamentation and rhetoric is no doubt a true instinct, and the modern recoil from the heavy exuberance in some of the early work of Laurence Binyon or the inflated emptiness of William Watson in particular moods makes for a healthy tension and pithiness; yet it is purblind folly and deafness of ear to run down as too elaborate the lyric exquisiteness of colourful phrase Binyon could display—

And sweet the rose floats on the arching briar's  
Green fountain sprayed with delicate frail fires—

or the epic grandeur of a packed sonnet-close from Watson—

And over me  
The everlasting taciturnity,  
The august, inhospitable, inhuman night  
Glittering magnificently unperturbed.

K. D. SETHNA

## THE FUTURE POETRY (continued)\*

### THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

A POETRY born direct from the power of the spirit is that for which we are seeking and of which the more profound tendencies of the creative mind seem to be in travail. This can only come if the mind of the race takes actually the step over which it is now hesitating. The progress of poetry, as it has been viewed in these pages, has been an index of an advance of the cultural mind of humanity which has enlarged its scope by a constant rising of the scale of the soul's experience and has now risen to a great height and breadth of intellectual vision and activity, and the question is at present of the next step in the scale of ascension, and whether it can now be firmly taken or will be missed once more with a fall back to another retracing of the psychological circuit.

The one thing that man sees above the intellect is the spirit, and, therefore, the developed intellect of the race, if it is at all to go forward, must open now to an understanding and seeing spirituality, other than the rather obscure religionism of the past which belonged to the lower levels of the life and the emotion and which has had its bounds broken and its narrowness condemned by the free light of intellectual thought. The alternative is a continual ringing of changes in the spinings of the intellectual circle which leads nowhere or else a collapse to the lower levels which may bring human civilisation down with a run to a new corrupted and intellectualised barbarism. This is a catastrophe which has happened before in the world's history. The possibility of such a catastrophe is by no means absent from the present human situation. The hope of the race in this crisis lies in the

\*A summary of Sri Aurobindo's Future Poetry ("Arya," 1917-1920)



fidelity of its intellect to the larger perceptions it now has of the greater self of humanity, the raising of the intellectual mind to the intuitive supra-intellectual, spiritual consciousness, which can alone give the basis for a spiritualised life of the race and the realisation of its diviner potentialities.

The voice of a new deeper intuitive poetry can be a powerful aid to this necessary change of seeing and aspiration. The note which has already begun and found many of its tones in Whitman and Carpenter and A.E. and Tagore will grow into a more full and near and intimate poetic knowledge and vision and feeling which will continue to embrace more and more, no longer only the more exceptional inner states and touches which are the domain of mystic poetry, but everything in our inner and outer existence until all life and experience has been brought within the mould of the spiritual sense and the spiritual interpretation. A poetry of this kind will be in a supreme way what all art should be, a thing of harmony and joy and illumination, a solution and release of the soul from its vital unrest and questioning and struggle, not by any ignoring of these things but by an uplifting into the strength of the self within and the light and air of its greater view where there is found not only the point of escape but the supporting calmness and power of a seated knowledge, mastery and deliverance. The poetry of Europe has been a voice intensely eager and moved but restless, troubled and without a sure basis of happiness and repose, vibrating with the passion of life and avid of its joy and pleasure and beauty, but afflicted also by its unrest, grief, tragedy, discord, insufficiency, incertitude, capable only of its lesser harmonies, not of any great release and satisfaction. The art and poetry of the East have been the creation of a larger and quieter spirit, intensely responsive as in the Far East to deeper psychic significances and finding there fine and subtle harmonies of the soul's experience or, as in India, expressing in spite of the ascetic creed of vanity and illusion much rather the greatness and power and satisfied activity of human thought and life and action and behind it the communion of the soul with the eternal. The poetry of the future, reconciling all these strains, will offer to the human mind a more complex aesthetic and spiritual satisfaction.

And this poetry must bring with it too a new depth of the intimacies of the soul with Nature. The early poetry of Nature gave us merely the delight of the forms of objects and the beauty of the setting of the natural world round man's life. A later tone brought in more of the subtleties of the vital soul of the natural world, and more profoundly an attempt at communion with a universal presence in Nature. A more deeply seeing and intimate poetry will take up these things into a yet greater Nature sense and vision and make us aware of the very self and soul and conscious

being of Nature, her profoundest psychic suggestion and significance, the spirit in her and the intuition she keeps hidden in her forms and veils and reveals more and more to the soul that has entered into unity with that spirit. The more intuitive mind of the future will feel as has not been felt before a unity with other consciousnesses in Nature. And it will open to and interpret not only man and terrestrial Nature, for a poetry concerned with that alone excludes large ranges of self-experience, but other domains also of our spirit. It will give the key of the worlds of supernature, and allow us to move along the beings and scenes, images and influences and presences of the psychic kingdoms which are near to us behind their dark or luminous curtain and will not be afraid to enter into vaster realms of the self and other universal states and the powers that stand behind our life and the soul's eternal spaces. It will do this not merely in a symbol of greatened human magnitudes, but with the close directness and reality that comes from intimate vision and feeling, and make these things a part of our living experience.

A poetry of large spiritual inspiration must necessarily be, when it is not dealing directly with eternal things and turns its eye on the movement of time and the actual life and destiny of man, largely present and futurist in its insistence. The poet will continue, though in a new way and with a new eye, to transfigure the past for us, but will not feel that need to live in an imaginative preoccupation with the past which withdraws compelled from the unmanageable actuality of the present: also it will reveal the divinity in all its disguises, face all even that is ugly and terrible and baffling in the enigma of our actual human life, and make out of it by poetic sympathy material of spiritual truth and beauty. But especially a clearer and more inspiring vision of the destiny of the spirit in man will be a large part of the poetry of the future. To it the past and present in time are not only the half-formed stuff of the coming ages, but in a profound sense it is the call and attraction of the future that makes the past and present, and that future will be more and more seen to be the growth of the godhead in the human being which is the high fate of this race that thinks and wills and labours towards its own perfection.

### THE FORM AND THE SPIRIT

A change in the spirit of poetry must necessarily bring with it a change of its forms. The opening of the creative mind into an intuitive and revelatory poetry need not of itself compel a revolution and a total breaking up of the old forms and a creation of altogether new moulds: it

may, especially where a preparatory labour in that sense has been doing a work of modification and adaptation, be effected for the most part by an opening up of new potentialities in old instruments and a subtle inner change of their character. But the great widening of which the human mind is now in labour is an effort of such rapidity and magnitude that to remould seems to be an insufficient change. There must certainly take place in order to satisfy the changed vision a considerable departure in all the main provinces of poetic creation, the lyric, the drama, the narrative or epic.

The lyrical impulse is the original and spontaneous creator of the poetic form, song the first discovery of the possibility of a higher because a rhythmic intensity of self-expression. The widest in range as it is the most flexible in form and motive of all the poetic kinds, the others have grown out of it by the assumption of a more settled and deliberate and extended speech and a more ample structure. It is, therefore, in the lyric nearest to the freshness of an original impulse that a new spirit in poetry is likely to become aware of itself and feel out for its right ways of expression and to discover with the most adaptable freedom and variety, its own essential motives and cadences, first forms and simpler structures before it works out victoriously its greater motives or ampler figures in narrative and drama.

The freshest and most spontaneous liquidities of song utterance abounded in past literature at times when the direct movement of the life-spirit has been the fountain-head of a stirred poetic utterance. The intellectual ages sing less easily. The too developed intellect cannot often keep or recover life's first fine careless rapture or call the memory of it into its own more loaded tones and measures. The lyric poetry of the ancient classical ages is largely of this character and we find a number of highly developed forms managed with a perfect and careful technique; the absolute simplicities and spontaneities of the soul's emotion which were the root of the original lyrical impulse got only an occasional opportunity of coming back to the surface, and in their place is a movement chastened and subdued to the service of the reflective poetic intelligence: the flowers of the field and mountain self-sown on the banks or near the sources are replaced by the blossoms of a careful culture. But in the literary ages that are classical by imitation, there is ordinarily a great poverty, an absence or thinness of the lyrical element, a withering of the lyrical movement under the coldly observant and too scrutinising eye of the reflective reason, and the revival of song has to await the romantic movement and sensibility. There is then a return to an imaginative effort to old forms and early simple movements. The work of this developed poetic intellectuality differs from the early



work whose spirit and manner it often tries hard to recover because it is the thought that is primarily at work and the form less a spontaneous creation of the soul than a deliberately intelligent structure. This distinction has many consequences and most this pregnant result that even the simplicities of a developed poetic thought are willed simplicities and the end is a curiosity of work that has many triumphs of aesthetic satisfaction but not often any longer the native tones of the soul when the pure lyrical feeling was still possible.

The turn to a more direct self-expression of the spirit must find out its way first by the emergence of a new kind of lyrical sincerity which is neither the directness of the surface life emotions nor the moved truth of the thought mind. It will be a transition from the lyricism of life weighted by the stress of thought to the lyricism of the inmost spirit which uses but is beyond thought that has to be made. And here we notice a significant tendency, an endeavour to present life in utmost clarity of its intention and form and outline stripped and discharged of the thought's abundant additions, made naked of the haze of the reflective intelligence, the idea being that we shall thus get at its bare truth and feeling, its pure vital intuition. But in actual fact this kind of verse, in which the rhythmic movement usually follows the fluctuations of life with a subtle adaptation of verbal music, sensibly fails to give us the satisfaction of a truly lyrical form, because it ignores the truth that what sustains the lyrical spirit is the discovery and consistent following of some central cadence revealing the very spirit of the feeling. And besides the bare truth of the vital intuition is not that inmost truth of things our minds are striving to see; that is not our identity in sight and spiritual emotion with the limited subconscious intuition of life, but rather a oneness with something in it at once superconscient, immanent and comprehensive of which that is only a blind index that will be the moving power of a greater utterance. And until we have found, whether by spiritual experience or poetic insight, this identity and its revelations in ourselves and in things, we shall not have laid a sound and durable basis for the future creation.

The essential and decisive step of the future art of poetry will perhaps be to discover that it is not the form which either fixes or reveals the spirit but the spirit which makes out of itself the form and the word and this with so sure a discovery, that their movement and mould become as spontaneously inevitable and structurally perfect as the magical formations of inconscient Nature. The decisive lyrical outburst must come when the poet has learnt to live creatively only in the inmost spiritual sight and identity of his own self with the self of his objects and images, and then we will find that this

has brought with it an unprecedented freedom of manifold and many-suggested and yet perfectly sufficient and definitive formation and utterance. The intimate and intuitive poetry of the future will have on one side all the inexhaustible range and profound complexities of the cosmic imagination of which it will be the interpreter and to that it must suit a hundred single and separate and combined and harmonic lyrical tones of poignantly or richly moved utterance, and on the other it will reach those bare and absolute simplicities of utter and essential sight in which thought sublimates into a translucidity of light and vision, feeling passes beyond itself into sheer spiritual ecstasy and the word rarifies into a pure voice out of the silence.

A spiritual change must equally come over the intention and form of the drama when once the age has determined its tendencies. Hitherto there have been two forms consecrated by great achievements, the drama of life, whether presenting only vivid outsides or expressive of the life-soul and its workings in event and character and passion; and the drama of the idea, or, more vitally, of the idea-power which at its highest tension appears as the conflict of ideal forces that produce the more lofty tragedies of human action. The paucity of great creation in the modern drama has been due largely to an inability to decide between these two motives. The only recent effective dramatic writing has been in prose and that has taken the questionable shape of the problem play. In the poetic form which has been for the most part a reproduction of past moulds and motives, an attempt has been initiated to create an inner drama of the soul with the soul itself for the real stage. In this endeavour there is a predoninance as yet of the lyrical rather than the dramatic motive, an insufficient power of making the characters living beings rather than unsubstantial types or shadows of soul movements or even the figures of a veiled allegory and parable; and there is needed perhaps a freer and more nobly aesthetic stage not limited by the external realism. Nevertheless this attempt is a true though not a complete index of the direction the creative mind must take in the future.

The drama of the future will differ from the romantic play or tragedy because the thing which dramatic speech will represent will be something more internal than the life soul and its brilliant pageant of passion and character. It will differ too from the classical tragedy of which the method was some significant and governing idea working out its life issues, it will be no longer an interpretation of Fate or self-acting Karma or of the simple or complex natural entanglements of the human life-movement, but a revelation of the Soul as its own fate and determiner of its life and its karma

and behind it of the powers and the movements of the spirit in the universe. It will not be limited by any lesser idealisms or realisms, it will not be limited either by any old or new formal convention, but transmute old moulds and invent others and arrange according to the truth of its vision its acts and the evolution of its dramatic process or the refrain of its lyrical or the march of its epic motive. This clue at least is the largest and the most suggestive for a new and living future creation in the forms of the drama.

The spirit and intention of the narrative and epic forms of poetry must undergo the same transmuting change. A simple relation or vivid picturing of life and action varied by descriptions, or with the development of an idea or a mental and moral significance will be substituted by a soul significance as the real substance, the action will not be there for its external surface interest, the surrounding circumstance will be only such as helps to point and frame the soul significance and bring out its accessory suggestions. An intensive narrative, intensive in simplicity or in richness of significant shades, tones and colours, will be the more profound and subtle art of this kind in the future and its structures determined by the needs of this inner art motive.

The epic is only the narrative presentation on its largest canvas and at its highest elevation. It is sometimes asserted that the epic is solely proper to primitive ages, but this is to mistake form and circumstance for the central reality. The epics of the soul most inwardly seen as they will be by an intuitive are the epic creator's greatest possible subject, and it is this supreme kind that we shall expect from some profound and mighty voice of the future.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH



## LIGHTS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS \*

(I) May the Yoga manifest the Blissful in us—the Yoga that manifests the unmanifest, whence the Lord presiding over the Supreme Shakti manifests Himself.<sup>1</sup>

This is a benedictory couplet with which the treatise starts, in accordance with the time-honoured custom. The manifestation of the Blissful in us is the object of the invocation. The truths about the Lord, the Yoga, the Supreme Shakti and their implied relation are to be noted. First, there is the assumption that the Lord presides over the Supreme Shakti for Self-manifestation. Next, there is a tact, an attitude, a poise that is inherent in his presiding over the supreme Power that makes the unmanifest manifest. Then, it is His Shakti that manifests, and He himself is the manifested; but the Shakti is not a mere manifesting instrument, She can remain in and as the unmanifest, She can be in rest as well as in movement. Therefore, it is stated that the manifestation proceeds from the Yoga, while certainly it is the Shakti that manifests. Now, what is the character of the Yoga whence the Shakti reveals the Lord? Derivatively, Yoga is union—union of the individual with the Universal or the soul with God. But when the term is applied to the Lord Himself, obviously it means something comprehensive and more radical which does not exclude the meaning that it is a power which effects the union of the soul with God. While the Yoga-power in the individual ultimately brings about the desired union with the Universal or the Lord, the same in the Lord is a creative poise sustained by the Shakti for bringing out and developing the world-existence. It is an aspect of the Lord which initiates the movement abroad, *pravritti*, for working out some of the possibilities in the infinitude of His Being, maintaining at the same time his union with everything that is put forth in the Manifestation. It is thus that every creation runs its course for the fulfilment of the purpose for which it is propelled into manifested existence. Therefore while Yoga for an individual soul wending its way to its own source in the Divine Being may be called *nivritti*, withdrawal from the outward life, not necessarily from world-existence, the Yoga of the Lord is *pravritti* in as much as it initiates, supports, brings to fruition the fuller

\* तत्त्वप्रभा ।

<sup>1</sup> अधिष्ठाय परां शक्तिमीश्वरो व्यज्यते यतः ।

अव्यक्तव्यञ्जको योगः स व्यञ्जयतु नः शिवम्॥१॥

development of the manifested being in the individual and collective or Cosmic existence.

It is the Yoga of the Lord in this definite sense that is aspired for and invoked; it is the supreme Shakti of the Lord that works out the purpose of the manifestation; it is the Lord of the Yoga, Yogeshwara himself that is to be manifested—the Blissful in us, *Shivam*. The Yoga, the Shakti, the Lord—each is distinctly mentioned and related to the Manifestation, which is another term for Creation as we shall see in due course. That this is the subject-matter of the treatise is thus mentioned in the opening verse, and this is in conformity with the ancient convention of Sanskrit authors, viz. indication of the subject-matter by implication or suggestion in the opening lines of a work.

(2) That Shakti is the Consciousness of the Lord; this world is the product of that Consciousness. This is the substance of all Vedic and Tantric Teachings, known to the wise.<sup>1</sup>

The supreme Power, Para Shakti, mentioned in the opening verse, is not a fund of energy or blind force; it is the Intelligence, which we call Consciousness that is fundamental to Existence itself. She is not a self-existent Power apart from the Lord, but is the very nature of the Lord's Being. She is Consciousness, static and eternally at rest, self-aware in the Lord, but throws out a movement of Herself from the Lord's Being; and the world, what we call creation, is the product of that movement. Then, it is stated that this world-existence is a product of that Consciousness-Force which is dynamic in its own becomings. It may be asked: what is the basis of such a statement? The reply is that this is the conclusion arrived at by the intuitive thinkers and seers of the Vedic and Agamic persuasion. Reference to the authority of scriptures here is quite relevant because these truths and their direct knowledge transcend the sphere of intellectual endeavour and the reasoning mind normally has no data to proceed on for arriving at conclusions about things that are out of its reach, howsoever wide, exalted, and sharp it may be in its own realm. Therefore the straightforward intelligence of man has to wait and strive for the development of higher faculties to penetrate into these truths or seek help from the trustworthy utterances of those who have had some contact with the region of Truths, some direct perception and intuitional knowledge of the ultra-mundane. For what is natural for the *seer* with the revelatory faculties for instruments of knowledge of the Sublime is extraordinary and abnormal

<sup>1</sup>सा शक्तिश्चित्तिरीशस्य चित्तेः कार्यमिदं जगत् ।

निगमागमसिद्धान्तसारोज्यं विदितो विदाम् ॥२॥

to the metaphysical seeking of the normal mind. And scriptures are but recorded statements of those who are in the know of these truths which are facts of their experience. And because these truths are always verifiable by those who are in right earnest and equipped for undertaking the task and as a matter of course could convince themselves of their universality, it is proper to hold the scriptures as authentic. Also, because these supra-intellectual truths are expressed in terms of the intellect in order to make them intelligible to the intelligent mind, it is implied that the higher and subtler faculties of the mind are not there to nullify the intellectual efforts of the mind, but on the contrary the latter find their fruition in the development of the former when properly directed through a felt awareness of their limitations and the consequent openness to receive the higher truths. This is the relevance for referring here to the scriptural teachings and it is not intended to suggest that one is obliged to accept blindly dogmatic statements asserted in the name of Scripture or Revelation.

(3) The supreme *meaning* is Para-Brahman, the Word is said to be his Shakti; the Truth of both is One indivisible, Eternal.<sup>1</sup>

The fundamentals of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo are presented here in terms of the Vedic and Tantric systems of Cosmology. The First Cause, the ultimate term of Being is called Para Brahman, which is the *meaning*, the essence or the substance. The term 'artha' *meaning* denotes Being, to whose very nature consciousness is fundamental. There is a power of expression inherent in it, Shakti; it is Shabda, the Logos, the Primal Sound, the Word, the vibrant movement of that Consciousness which manifests and points to the Being that is its reserve. Hence the Word and the Meaning, Shabda and Artha. The Power of the Being and the Being are both of them, the same Truth, the One Eternal, presenting a biune aspect, yet inseparable because of their essential oneness.

(4) The Supreme One, the Lord as the vibrant Word, is and becomes the Powerful, incubates, increases, releases these worlds inseparable from Himself.<sup>2</sup>

The Supreme Sole Being has been already stated to be the fundamental consciousness and this latter, while static in the conserving poise, is by the very nature of its infinitude, endued with an expressional aspect which

<sup>1</sup>परमोऽर्थः परं ब्रह्म शब्दस्तच्छक्तिरुच्यते ।

अनयोरविभाज्यं तत्सत्यमेकं सनातनम् ॥३॥

<sup>2</sup>परः शब्दात्मको भूत्वा शक्तस्तपति वर्धते ।

स्वतोऽविभाज्यान्येतानि जगन्ति विसृजन्विभुः ॥४॥



translates itself into a movement for Self-manifestation, connoted by the word *Shabda*, the vibrant consciousness. He is *Shakta*, Powerful, ever fresh with a power to bring out something of himself; He maintains it in himself, by the force of *Tapas*, in the heat of what may be called the creative incubation, *tapati*, preparing what is to be brought out of himself for the assumption of huge and varied dimensions, of gradations in degree and kind, of difference in stress and quality and feature. By virtue of this poise of His Consciousness which is the agency for manifesting something of the Unmanifest which is beyond all formations, He may be said to increase, *vardhate*. From such an increase, the outflow of something in himself in the form of these worlds results. This is called the release, *visrishti*, of the worlds. And these again are not separable from himself since He is said to be the Indivisible One out of whom these worlds are loosened, released and set forth.

(*To be continued*)

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

All belongs to the Divine—there must be no ego or desire—only the Divine and its Light, Knowledge, Power, Ananda, action. But all this must come from above—not from the mixed lower cosmic forces.

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The cosmic forces here whether good or bad are forces of the Ignorance. Above them is the Truth-Consciousness that can only manifest when ego and desire are overcome—it is the force from the Divine Truth-Consciousness that must descend—the higher Peace, Light, Knowledge, Purity, Ananda must work upon the cosmic forces in the individual so as to change them and substitute the Truth-forces in place of the ordinary working.

SRI AUROBINDO

## SPIRITUAL POETRY

### (1) THE ALLEGED OBSCURITY OF SPIRITUAL POETRY

THE treatment of spiritual subjects in poetry is sometimes objected to on the ground that they are beyond the comprehension of the greatest number. But such an objection seems contrary to the very law of poetic creation. A poet in his act of creation has to be faithful to his own vision or experience irrespective of the level of others. To demand of him a fidelity or stooping to the mental and emotional level of the other people amounts to a reducing of his function to that of a pulpit preacher who vibrates not so much with his own thoughts as the thoughts of the people. This of course does not mean that the poet strikes a note which can never find a response in others and he is thus open to the charge of idiosyncrasy. His vision has a universality but it touches a point on the scale of a man's being which is yet not awake but which his poetry will help in putting into activity, though the effect may not be consciously felt as instantaneous. It appears that the democratic wave has also invaded the field of arts but such an invasion will imperil not only the quality but the very existence of artistic creation. The question of majority and minority is quite foreign to the very genius of poetry. As Sri Aurobindo writes to a disciple, "How many people will appreciate it is a question which is irrelevant to the merit of the poetry. More people have appreciated sincerely Macaulay's *Lays* or Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* than ever really appreciated *Timon of Athens* or *Paradise Regained*,—but that does not determine the relative value or appropriateness of these things as poetry. Artistic or poetic value cannot be reckoned by the plaudits or the reactions of the greatest number." It serves as a very good answer to all such critics who refuse to have anything to do with Sri Aurobindo's poetry simply because it deals with experiences beyond the ken of an ordinary person. If the appreciation of the people would have been the guiding principle of poets, then the world would have been deprived of some of its best artistic treasures. Ordinarily even when a poet is not a yogi, even when he is dealing with common things of the earth, the eye with which he looks at them is always tuned to a higher wave length than that of the common man. That lofty vision he has to give to the reader before he can follow it not in the sense that the reader borrows it from him but it is awakened by catching the vibrations of the poet's eye or rather by the impact upon his soul of the poet's consciousness. If poetry is not a matter of mental understanding

but a sympathetic communion with the soul of the poet through the medium of his soul's creation, then it seems to be utterly unsound to reject a poetry on the basis of its lofty thought or experience. The entire question ultimately resolves on the line of one's approach. We do not set aside the great poem of God, the mysterious universe, 'this unintelligible world' or 'this phantasmal scene', as a meaningless jugglery or a lofty flight of the Divine truth-consciousness, but ever receive from it an inexhaustible stream of nourishing felicity in spite of its mystery which never perplexes our mind but sinks it under its sovereign sublimity, so that we cast off our intellect as a snake its skin in a moment of spiritual resurrection.

## (2) THE LEVELS OF POETIC VISION

This intensity of vision "does not depend only on the individual power of vision of the poet, but on the mind of his age and country, its level of thought and experience, the adequacy of its symbols, the depth of its spiritual attainment." Here Sri Aurobindo relates the development of poetic vision with the evolutionary progress of mankind for the various levels of poetic vision—firstly the fixing of the eye only upon the physical world about him, next a vital poetry and a view enlightened by reason, after that the poet's attempt to see greater things behind the outward physical, vital and thought symbol and finally a deeper vision when the soul in things or other worlds than the physical open themselves to his sight—correspond to the various stages physical, vital, mental, psychic and supra-intellectual in the evolution of the earthly consciousness. As the age in which we live stands on the verge of a new spiritual change, a more evolved consciousness of the race as a whole, a poet in our days even of secondary power can attain a more profound and poetic power than a poet of very high creative power like Shakespeare in the ancient time.

## (3) THE PLACE OF EMOTION IN POETRY

The stress laid upon a creative interpretation of things does not eschew emotion as if poetry is merely an expression of the thought and has nothing to do with feeling. The one universally acknowledged attribute of poetry, namely, its power to arouse emotion as laid down by Wordsworth, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," or by Coleridge according to whom passion is 'the all in all in poetry', or by Theodore Watts, "No literary expression can properly speaking be called poetry which is not in a certain deep sense emotional" and again by Ribot who says that



emotion "is the ferment without which no creation is possible" holds good also in Sri Aurobindo's view. But the emotion which he admits is not that of the vital parts but of the higher kind which arises from the inner heart, the hidden cave. He thus writes about poetic utterance that it "must carry in it and arouse in us an emotion of its touch on the soul, not the raw emotion of the vital parts,—though that comes in certain kinds of poetry—but a spiritual essence of feeling to which our inner strands can vibrate. The intellectual, vital, sensible truth are subordinate things; the breath of poetry should give us along with them, or it may even be apart from them, some more essential truth of the being of things, their very power which springs in the last resort from something eternal in their heart and secrecy, *hridaya guhayam*, expressive even in the moments and transiencies of life" (Future Poetry—the Sun of Poetic Truth). This is somewhat akin to the meaning given to the feeling in poetry by Pater who regards it as the "soul", a deeper vital force as distinguished from "mind in style". He thus writes in his essay 'Style', "And this too is a faculty of choosing and rejecting what is congruous or otherwise, with a drift towards unity—unity of atmosphere here, as there of design, soul securing colour (or perfume, might we say?) as mind secures form, the latter being essentially finite, the former vague or infinite." The same deeper sense is given by Carlyle who says, "For always of its own unity the soul gives unity to whatsoever it looks on with love". Lamb also uses this term in a deeper sense as distinguished from passion. He says that this is the power "which draws all things to one which makes things animate or inanimate, subjects and their accessories, take one colour, and serve to one effect". This again does not mean that vital poetry that is poetry written from poetic sensations and not from ideas cannot be powerful. On the contrary Sri Aurobindo holds that purely vital poetry can be very remarkable. He writes in one of his letters: "The poets of the vital plane seize with a great vividness and extraordinary force of rhythm and phrase the life-power and very sensation of the things they describe and express them to the poetic sense." What is unsound is not the vital level of vision but an exclusion of the other powers of poetry, a want of heightening of that level by the breath of the higher planes. The poet continues, "What is often lacking in them is a perfect balance between this power and the other powers of poetry: intellectual, psychic, emotional etc. There is something in them which gives an impression of excess—when they are great in genius, splendid excess but still not the perfect perfection." This is also the one evil feature of modern poetry which unduly exaggerates the lower vital reactions without transforming them by the ideal spirit of poetry. Such a work will improve in quality

only when the poets draw their inspiration from a higher source. The Mother thus writes, "Most of those who call themselves artists draw their inspiration from the vital world only; and it carries in it no high or great significance. But when a true artist, one who looks for his creative source to a higher world turns to yoga, he will find that his inspiration becomes more direct and powerful and his expression clearer and deeper." (Words of the Mother p.188). While recognising the importance of emotion in the process of poetic creation, he does not ignore the necessity of the background of life. It is true that poetry is the creation of the soul but the matchstick of the soul requires the safety match box of external environment for the production of blazing beauty by friction. This in other words is knowledge by identity. Emotion alone cannot produce poetry. Such a balanced view of artistic creation is evident from another letter in which Sri Aurobindo remarks, "Emotion alone is not enough for producing anything that can be called creation, it can render something lyrical and slight at best. There must be a background of life, a vital rich and stored or a mind and an imagination that has seen much and observed much or a soul that has striven and been conscious of its strivings."

#### (4) THE RELATION OF YOGA TO ART

Thy psychic origin of creation proves the value of yoga in increasing a person's poetic powers. For if poetry is an expression of the poet's realisation or vision of something in his inner consciousness, any discipline which helps in the growth of consciousness must also contribute to the development of a person's creative powers. Yoga is a discipline by which one enters into communion with the inner life of things.

It must, therefore, necessarily be a powerful aid to artistic creation. The Mother gives two examples, one of a girl-dancer who had no education and the other of a boy who had studied only a little of art, who acquired a fine capacity in writing and painting after they took up yoga. Sri Krishna Prem observes, "Traditionalists and those who take a narrow view of sadhana will perhaps wonder what poetry has to do with yoga. The truth is that the reintegration of the psyche that is brought about by sadhana has the effect of releasing unsuspected powers that were lying latent in the heart of the sadhaka as indeed they are in the hearts of all. We read in books of yoga that by meditating on Her who shines in the Root Lotus with the lustre of ten million Suns, a man becomes a Lord of speech and, ... pure of heart, by his deep and musical words serves the greatest of the Gods. The truth of such words, now a days too often assumed to be mere empty

praise is witnessed by these poems left by Arjava." Sri Aurobindo himself has testified to this power of yoga. He thus writes, "I have seen both in myself and others a sudden flowering of capacities in every kind of activity come by the opening of the consciousness so that one who laboured long without the least success to express himself in rhythm becomes a master of poetic language and cadences in a day."

Of course that does not mean that everybody can become a great poet; for one should not lose sight of the fact that a poet is chosen by the Divine to manifest Himself in him and He chooses only such instruments who are more favourable recipients of the light from above. But still it is possible by yoga to make this faculty grow if it at all exists. What is required is an openness to the pressure from above and a complete absence of resistance on the part of one's own will. In another letter Sri Aurobindo writes, "when somebody wants, really, to develop the literary power, I put some force to help him or her. If there is a faculty and application, however latent the faculty, it always grows under the pressure and can even be turned in this or that direction. Naturally, some are more favourable adharas than others and grow more decisively and quickly. Others drop off not having the necessary power of application. But on the whole it is easy enough to make this faculty grow if there is cooperation on the part of the recipient and only the *tamas* of the *apavritti* and *aprakash* in the human mind to overcome which are not such serious obstacles in the things of the mind as a vital resistance or non-cooperation of the will or idea which confronts one when there is a pressure for change or progress in other directions."

As poetry is an expression of the soul and is written by a concentration upon the inner self, by first going within and it is after having a vision of the beautiful in one's inner consciousness that it is executed in the discipline of yoga. It serves as a means of psychic transformation of bringing the psyche to the front. The poet by this discipline is made to live habitually in the soul and retire from the outward surface life and mind, for the very process of artistic creation requires such a plunge into the depth of the psyche. For this reason it is prescribed by Sri Aurobindo as a form of yoga sadhana. He points out this value of poetry for the growth of consciousness. "As for poetry, the value of your poetry when you write from the point of view of your sadhana, is this: that the psychic being is always behind it—even when you are in the depths of mental and vital despondency, as soon as you write the psychic being intervenes and throws its self-expression into what you write. It is that that has made people with some inner life in them, those who have some touch of the spiritual, feel these poems of yours so



much. That too is the main reason (there are others) why I have given unstinted encouragement to your poetry, because it is the psychic means of self-expression in you—there you are at once open.” Ordinarily a person is shut out from the inner light by the external barriers of his surface life but under the pressure of poetic flow these walls are broken and there is an opening to the light of the inner guide. But that does not mean that poetry by itself will lead to the union with the Divine. It is only a means for the growth of psychic being, a tonic to the vital which are necessary initial stages on the spiritual path. As the Master makes it clear in another letter, “Poetry? Of course by itself it does not bring one to the goal, but it can help as a means to and deepens one’s aspiration while it gives the vital as I said to you repeatedly which can keep it from rusting and maintains its energy. Otherwise it may droop or go dry or sulk or non-cooperate.” The impelling force behind all great creation as distinguished from a purely vital inspiration is the joy which the poet feels in the expression of the psychic being. It is this joy welling up from his inner depths which takes the form of artistic creation, a joy not of the vital kind but a spiritual ananda which is ordinarily concealed from him in his outward surface life. Sri Aurobindo has on this ground again justified the writing of poetry as a part of *sadhana*. “Poetry can start from any plane of consciousness although like all art or one might say all creation—it must always come through the vital if it is to be alive. And as there is always a joy in creation, that joy along with a certain *enthousiasmos*—not enthusiasm, if you please, but *anandamaya avesh* must always be there whatever the source.....Your inspiration comes from the linking of the vital creative instrument to a deeper psychic experience, and it is that which makes the whole originality and peculiar individual power and subtle and delicate perfection of your poems. It was indeed because this linking-on took place that the true poetic faculty suddenly awoke in you, for it was not there before, at least on the surface. The joy you feel, therefore, was no doubt, partly the simple joy of creation, but there comes also into it the joy of expression of the psychic being which was seeking for an outlet since your boyhood. It is this that justifies your poetry-writing as a part of your *sadhana*.” And this ananda which is something greater than peace or joy can be experienced only when the psychic being is in front. The very existence of this ananda, therefore, which flows out in the act of poetic creation is an indication of a psychic transformation.

JAGADISH SARAN AGARWAL

## REVIEWS

(I)

**HUMAN LIFE AND BEYOND.** By *Sures Chandra Chakravarti, M.A. B.L.* Published by the University of Calcutta, 1947. Price India Rs. 4:- Foreign 7s. 6d. Pp. 106.

The work under review is a bold presentation, in a uniformly elegant and dignified style, of the author's interpretation of the universe and his well-considered views about the great problems of existence. It is a contribution to synthetic thinking, and an attempt to show that the advancement of modern science in the West is no refutation but rather a demonstration of the ancient wisdom of the East. As the author puts it: "The West has, at this distance of time, supplied the arguments for the Conclusions long arrived at by the East. The palm of glory goes to the West, for demonstration alone establishes truth." (Foreword, XI). But with a view to a proper appreciation of this vindication of the truth of ancient wisdom in modern science it is as much necessary that the spirit of recent scientific developments should be thoroughly understood as that the teaching of the Upanishads should be restored in its original purity.

The author, therefore, first gives us the scientific background of his picture of the universe, having reminded us that Truth is, in its essence, Law, which is objective, inflexible and all-pervasive in character. He contends that though it may be true that science has been no less destructive in the domain of thought than in the field of action, still it has destroyed only the accumulated debris of blind superstitions and wishful fantasies. On the basis of such destruction science has really helped to re-adjust the relation between the Creator and the created in a manner which no religion in the world would ever have dared doing. Science has made the Creation as great and noble as the Creator and quite worthy of Him.

In a rapid survey of recent developments of such great sciences as Astronomy, Geology, Biology and Physics, the author shows that all of them emphasise the fundamental unity, continuity and evolutionary character of the universe. They reveal the world as one uninterrupted continuum of events which is constantly growing, moving and evolving. Modern Physics in particular has revolutionised our outlook and carried our insight very deep into the heart of reality. It shows that the traditional concepts of matter, space, time, gravity etc. do not admit of material representation;

and thus tends to the conclusion that the apparently self-existent material world is the manifestation of some cosmic intelligent principle.

And what do we find when we turn to the ancient wisdom of the East such as is mainly enshrined in the Upanishads? It is a matter of great regret that while Western critics have discredited much of ancient wisdom as the outcome of an untrustworthy mystical process, that Yoga, in their opinion, is, renowned Eastern philosophers have failed to interpret the philosophy of the Upanishads adequately and in its original purity on account of their sectarian bias. The author shows that yoga is no unintelligible mystical process, but rather a scientifically explicable psychological process of immense value for extending the bounds of human knowledge. It is a method of obtaining knowledge by means of one-pointed concentration of consciousness, and may, therefore, be described as a sort of high-powered mental telescope. In ancient India it was discovered that if a single object could be completely isolated from the tremendous rush of objects which continuously invaded the mental plane and intensely meditated upon, all about it could be known.

With regard to the philosophy of the Upanishads, the author has sought to steer a middle course between the interpretations of Sankara and Ramanuja. Sankara's Mayavada is, in his view, a perverse misrepresentation of the original teaching of the Upanishads, which misrepresentation may be traced to the influence upon Sankara of the Nihilistic doctrine of Buddhism. Ramanuja was perfectly right in stressing the reality of the objective world, but he could not, on account of his own religious predilection, gather courage to identify the human soul with Brahman, the ultimate reality. The author maintains that the quintessence of Upanishadic teaching may be expressed as follows: "Brahman is true, the world is true, the soul, like everything else, is Brahman." (p. 52).

Modern science has demonstrated that the world is the manifestation of some fundamental Energy the essential nature of which it cannot fathom. But if we take into account the specific character of the world-process which is an ordered development of ever higher forms and qualities, we cannot escape the conclusion that that fundamental Creative Energy must be the Energy of Will. Man who is a form of manifestation of the same Supreme Will that creatively sustains the universe is free, not in the sense that he can act arbitrarily according to his passing likes and dislikes but in the sense that he participates in the nature of that Supreme Will. Then, with regard to the problem of evil, the author maintains that in an evolutionary perspective evil cannot but appear as an increasingly vanishing phenomenon, so that pessimism is only relative to our ignorance of the rich promise of evolution.



It is indeed heartening in these days of all-encircling gloom and despair to listen to the author's voice of robust optimism when he affirms that "in this progressive world there is sure to come a time when evil and imperfection will cease to exist, when no one will die of starvation and there will be no more untimely deaths and, when amity among men and nation will be the order of the day." (p. 84).

We finally come to the author's astounding theory of death. While evil is believed to be an increasingly vanishing quantity, death is conceived by him as the gateway to the finite individual's re-union with the Infinite. "Death in fact means the end of the so-called separation of the part from the whole. The finite individual regains consciousness of his oneness with the Infinite." (p.90). Death is to be understood as a case of transformation of bottled-up energy into unbottled energy, in terms of consciousness. It is supposed to open the prison-gate of man's consciousness. That being so, the author asks us to look upon death not as a source of terror but as an occasion for rejoicing, and exhorts us, in conclusion, to apply to our life the acquisitions of modern progress, and build it anew on the basis of truth and truth alone.

Now, as will be evident from the foregoing analysis, the book under review has many attractive features, and so deserves to be carefully read by all those who are interested in a comparative study of Eastern wisdom and Western thought. The reader may, of course, feel in the course of his study that some points should have been further elaborated and some conclusions ought to have been further substantiated. The author has indeed dealt with too large and too many problems within too brief a compass. Recent developments in various modern sciences have passed under a very rapid survey. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the different systems of Indian philosophy have come in for a hurried discussion. The deep philosophical problems relating to the nature and destiny of the individual, freedom of will, evil, evolution, death, etc seem to have received a rather summary treatment. But still the reader is sure to enjoy the author's freshness of outlook and strength of conviction. We have no mind to enter here into a criticism of the author's views that the human Self has no persistent individuality, that the doctrine of Avatar is a childish idea (p. 96), that prayer and worship are simply meaningless, (p. 96) and that religion is essentially a product of the fear of the unknown (p. 93). But we cannot help noting here that the author has often allowed himself to be carried too far by scientific analogies. For instance, he believes that the scientific phenomenon of the unbottling of bottled-up energy provides the key to the mystery of death. That is why he looks upon death as the gateway to the finite individual's re-union with

the Infinite. Had it been so, then every man, whether a saint or a sinner, might have been assured of spiritual liberation as a free gift of physical Nature, and all the mighty spiritual adventures of man in search of immortality would have been only a long record of meaningless self-dissipation. The truth is that what really separates man from God is not the fact of his material embodiment which represents so much bottled-up energy, but rather his basic Ignorance. So the way to spiritual liberation or union with the Infinite lies not in death or bodily disintegration but in the dissipation of Ignorance which may be achieved either long before death in this very life or long after death in consequence of further spiritual evolution continued through successive re-incarnations. Anyway, it is for the reader to judge and to disentangle the true from the untrue. The book is without doubt amply thought-provocative, and contains abundant material for reflection.

H. D. CHAUDHURI

## II

**History of Western Philosophy and its connexions with political and social circumstances from the earliest times to the present day.** By *Bertrand Russel*. Allen and Unwin. 21s.

**Democracy and Civilisation : a contribution to the understanding of the problems of contemporary civilisations and politics.** By *Geraint Vaughan Jones*. Hutchinson. 21s.

**Religion and Society** by *S. Radhakrishnan*. Allen and Unwin. 10s. 6d.

As a modern thinker, Bertrand Russel is very popular with a section of our educated community. He has tried to give a philosophy of the world which will dispense with all dogmas and be based on reason and this he offers as a basis for humanity and tolerance. He has an up-to-date knowledge of modern science and follows the current fashions of thought. With all this, a closer scrutiny shows that his modernity is only apparent and he really belongs to the supreficial rationalists of the eighteenth century. He begins by making a distinction between Philosophy and Science in these terms: "All *definite* knowledge—so I should contend—belongs to science." But as it is not easy to define what is *definite*, he would make himself more precise by saying that all definite knowledge of things belongs to the sciences of observation, experiment and hypothesis. But is this not taking a very partial view of philosophy that it has no basis in observation and experiment and that it is more or less a body of fanciful speculation or mere moonshine

as some would call it? Then why has Mr. Russel written so much philosophy? His position is something like that of Locke and Hume, and he holds that it is the business of philosophical thought to show that nothing can be known definitely in philosophy.

Philosophy, however, as we know it in India, has its basis and draws its materials from spiritual experience which itself is constituted by observation, experiment and hypothesis. "The Indian mind", says Sri Aurobindo, "does not admit that the only possible test of values or of reality is the scientific, the test of a scrutiny of physical Nature or the every-day normal facts of our psychology. What are the tests of these mere ordinary or objective values? Evidently experience, experimental analysis and synthesis, reason and intuition,—for I believe the value of intuition is admitted now-a-days by modern philosophy and science. The tests of the other orders of truths are the same, experience, experimental analysis and synthesis, reason and intuition: only since these things are truths of the soul and spirit, it must necessarily be a psychological and spiritual experience, a psychological and psycho-physical experimentation, analysis and synthesis, a large intuition which looks into higher realms and realities and possibilities of being, a reason which admits something beyond itself, looks upward to the suprarational, tries to give as far as may be an account of it to the human intelligence. Yoga is itself nothing but a well-tested means of opening up this greater realm of experience." (*A Defence of Indian Culture*).

By the definiteness of scientific knowledge as distinguished from philosophy, people often mean that the former has absolute solidity and certainty, while the latter has not. But what is the fact? Russel himself has often said that scientific truths are tentative, approximate and reformatory. Einstein observes in his book, *Evolution of Physics*: "We are concerned with the adventures in scientific thought which create an ever-changing picture of the universe." And it is bound to be so, as science is professedly concerned with phenomena, with appearances of things, and cannot look into the Reality behind. But philosophy, basing its conclusions on conceptions of Reality, gives knowledge which is more definite and gives a meaning to life and action. The true distinction between science and philosophy lies in this that though both use reason as their instrument of knowledge, and have all the defects as well as merits that are inherent in human reason, the former uses what Sri Aurobindo calls a mixed or dependent action of reason and the latter uses a pure or sovereign action. "Reason accepts a mixed action when it confines itself to the circle of our sensible experience, admits its law as the final truth and concerns itself only with the



study of phenomenon, that is to say, with the appearances of things in their relations, processes and utilities. This rational action is incapable of knowing what is, it only knows what appears to be, it has no plummet by which it can sound the depths of being, it can only survey the field of becoming. Reason, on the other hand, asserts its pure action, when accepting our sensible experiences as a starting-point but refusing to be limited by them, it goes behind, judges, works in its own right and strives to arrive at general and unalterable concepts which attach themselves not to appearances of things but to that which stands behind their appearances." Russel accepts only the mixed action of reason as the only valid action and thus comes under the category of philosophers known as the empiricists. In philosophy he accepts the general standpoint of Locke as will be apparent from the following quotation.

"Lock's philosophy, as it appears in the *Essay*, has throughout certain merits and certain demerits. Both alike were useful: the demerits are such only from a *theoretical* standpoint. He is always sensible, and always willing to sacrifice logic rather than become paradoxical...A characteristic of Locke which descended from him to the whole Liberal movement, is lack of dogmatism. Some few certainties he takes over from his predecessors: our own existence, the existence of God, and the truth of mathematics. But whenever his doctrines differ from those of his forerunners, they are to the effect that truth is hard to ascertain, and that a rational man will hold his opinion with some measure of doubt...Whenever he is expressing new ideas, and not merely repeating what is traditional, he thinks in terms of concrete detail rather than of large abstractions. His philosophy is piecemeal, like scientific work, not statuesque, and not all of a piece, like the great continental systems of the 17th century. Locke may be regarded as the founder of empiricism, which is the doctrine that all our knowledge (with the possible exception of mathematics and logic) is derived from experience."

In this way, confining themselves to only the dependent action of reason (that is, dependent on sense-experience), Locke and his followers could not reach the heights of philosophy, but gave a view of the world satisfactory to common sense. Russel as a philosopher could not remain altogether satisfied with this. He had to admit that we cannot go very far if we limit ourselves to sense experience and common sense: thus the law of causation or the uniformity of nature which is the basis of all definite scientific knowledge is not given by sense experience. Russel himself observes: "It must be granted that this is a serious departure from pure empiricism, and that those who are not empiricists may ask why, if one departure is, allowed

others are to be forbidden." He gives no answer to this question but sticks to the guns of empiricism, and in this respect goes beyond Locke. The latter admitted the existence of matter, soul and God, but the pure empiricism of Russel like that of Hume does not allow him to admit these things. He aims at reconstructing the world out of sense impressions and ideas. Like Hume he denies substance and his neutral monism regards both mind and material things as logical constructions of sense-data and sensibilia. He ends by declaring that he does not believe that philosophy can either prove or disprove the truths of religious dogmas, that the human intellect is unable to find conclusive answers to many questions of profound importance to mankind and that the habit of careful veracity acquired in the practice of this philosophical method can be extended to the whole sphere of human activity, producing, wherever it exists, a lessening of fanaticism with an increasing capacity of sympathy and mutual understanding.

That is how far the modernism of Russel goes, but it has little more than a negative value; though it is a corrective to dogmatisms in religion and also in social theories like Fascism or Marxism, it admittedly cannot give conclusive answers to many questions of profound importance to mankind. Russel's book is not a history of philosophy in the ordinary sense, it does not give us an account of the development of thought in the West as a whole, but it seeks to find a philosophical foundation of the political view which Russel himself holds. But here he has failed on account of the limited view of the function of reason on which his philosophy is based. As in philosophical outlook, he belongs to the eighteenth century, in politics he is a late nineteenth-century Radical with an irrepressible aversion from Marxism and all forms of totalitarianism. His own outlook is based upon a profound respect for the personality and rights of the human individual. According to his general philosophy, a man is no more than a transient collection of sense-data. Can one reasonably have for such a bundle of sense-data the respect which Russel as a political thinker wants us to secure for human personality? Does not such a respect logically depend upon a very different metaphysical conception of human nature?

Russel is the spokesman of the view held by many of our foremost leaders that agnostic-empiricism makes for humanity and tolerance. "But this is an unstable equilibrium which could in no case last for long and which assuredly has no future. Either it must be consolidated into a dogmatic secularism such as Marx preached, or it must lead to a revolt from ineffective and unsatisfying reason such as we have seen in the current of thought which is derived from Rousseau. If the genuine values which Russel upholds are to be preserved, men must understand clearly why they should be

humane and tolerant; they must arrive once again at the positive conception of man on which these values depend, and they must accept the intellectual and moral discipline which this conception of man entails." This view, expressed by a reviewer in *The Times*, London, shows that Russel is not a true representative or interpreter of modern thought, even in the West. It is held there that a right use of reason will lead us to more than Russel is able to offer us. One illustration of this we find in the second book in the list we have given above.

In *Democracy and Civilisation*, Mr. Vaughan Jones upholds the view that civilization can survive only on the basis of democracy and democracy only on the spiritual conception of man. The present European civilization which is known as modern civilization is largely the result of forces liberated at the Renaissance, and it is overshadowed by the repudiation, conscious or unconscious, of a supernatural or religious basis for ethics. And the result is that today, as is glaringly evident, morality has reached an alarmingly low ebb. But the future of civilization depends upon the spiritual rejuvenation of democracy. The author being a Christian understands spirituality in terms of the Christian religion, as Berdyev and Toynbee have done. The Christian understands history in terms of his doctrine of man: "If man is to be fully understood in society he is to be thought of not only in terms of psychology, politics, biology, and social behaviour (as he is observed by scientists, mass observation, and statisticians,) but as a spiritual being. Man cannot be fully understood apart from God; this truth is reinforced by the fact of the Incarnation. Man is made in the image of God, he has fallen and has been redeemed: he is made for fellowship; his ultimate significance is to be found not in this world but in eternity: he is free; he is an end and not a means. These are the main elements in the Christian doctrine of man. What are the implications for politics? Primarily that human rights are universal and cannot be restricted to any one class, nation, or race. It is only in relation to God, to the divine origin of man that rights are inalienable. The ultimate defence of democracy is spiritual."

The Indian view of spirituality is presented in the third book in our list, *Religion and Society*, where the author, S. Radhakrishnan, uses the word religion not in a narrow sectarian sense, but as meaning spirituality. After a penetrating criticism of the European heresies of nationalism, racialism and Marxism, he pleads eloquently for the restoration of spirituality as the basis for a new world order. The distinction between the Christian view and the Indian view is essentially this that while the Christian regards man as made in the image of God, Indians regard man as essentially one



with God, there being only one Reality without a second, of which every thing else is a form and a manifestation. Another difference is that while the Christian conception of immortality is that of a higher life to be attained after death above this mortal world, the Indian ideal is its realisation here and now, *ihaiva*. Closely following Sri Aurobindo, Dr. Radhakrishnan observes: "The world is not a mistake or an illusion to be cast aside by the soul, but a scene of spiritual evolution by which out of the material the divine consciousness may be manifested." As Sri Aurobindo has shown in his great book, *The Life Divine*, this is not a dogmatic theology, as Russel would say, but is based on the highest reason...it is supported by the pure and sovereign action of reason which alone can give a completely satisfactory account of the world and of the place of man in it.

But the European reader, though agreeing with the criticism of contemporary European society and appreciating the high philosophy of the Hindus, finds it difficult to accept a solution based on Hindu values and practices. Thus an outspoken critic observes: "Hinduism may, as its champions hold, claim the credit of having preserved Indian Civilization intact through the revolutions of 5,000 years, but the outside observer cannot help contrasting the lofty teaching of the Hindu sages with the gross realities of Hindu practice, and is at a loss to reconcile the high ethics of the Upanishads with the burning of widows, the marriage of immature children, the prostitution of the temple-girls, the scandal of untouchability, and the obscene rites of the Tantras." Sir Sarvapalli replies that these are mere excrescences, poisonous outgrowths, and that the main trunk of Hinduism is sound and healthy. But unless the Hindus can show in actual life the results of spiritualisation, mere verbal replies will not be convincing. Gandhiji's doctrine of non-violence raised great hopes throughout the world that Indian spirituality might find some radical solution of the ills of the world. But Gandhiji himself had to declare the failure of his mission in this respect. We have had many preachers of the high ideals of Indian spirituality, what is needed now is the realisation of those ideals in the outer life of man. Only then would India be able to claim the spiritual leadership of mankind.

A. B.

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